



Hue and Miley

Hue and Miley have been good friends for a long time. They completely accept each other regardless of their shortcomings. Now that Miley is getting married, Hue has become her best man and as such, is taking care of her the best way he knows how. However, it is quite possible that Hue finds another woman he'd like to get close to



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Hue describes his day to his best friend Miley, she begins to laugh so hard she is crying. “Actually, I’m not so sure this is so funny. Even after I’ve told the story over, I’m not laughing. What makes all these things so funny to you?” he asks quite annoyed.

Miley catches her breath, “Hue, you are the only person I know who can get a coffee spilled on them, have the taxi he is in break down, step into a puddle getting out of the car and need to buy new clothes and still get to work on time. I would not have shown up to work until lunchtime, or I would have shown up looking completely tattered. Hue, you are an anomaly and the fact that you can’t even see that is completely hilarious all on its own,” she says as she continues to laugh.

Hue smiles at her, “I suppose that a lot did happened before work today. However, I’m not finding them funny. I ruined my good pair of shoes and now I don’t have them. The mud inside has completely ruined the lining of my shoes, shoemaker wouldn’t even look at them. My pants had to be taken to the dry-cleaners and who knows how much that will cost, to get out the stains. Miley, I don’t see humor in any of this. I’m sorry.”

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“Be less serious for a while, will you Hue, I love you. I always have, but this is the biggest difference between us. I always see the humor in life and you always see each day as a something you have to beat or overcome,” she comments. “Look, any one of those things alone would have gotten a laugh out of people if they were watching the scene happen on television or in a movie, so why can’t it be in life?” she looks to him as she always does, with concern. When will Hue learn that not all parts of life are serious and that it is fine to laugh at the little things?

“I would not have laughed even had I watched them. I simply don’t find them funny. Look Miley, you and I go to the zoo together and you only see beauty in the animals in front of you. I, on the other hand, see the marvels of the engineering as to how the builders of the zoo completed each and every space to be so specific towards the animals they are housing. How they figured out how far apart to put each building and even each tree. The animals are almost secondary to me. There is a marketing marvel who was involved as well, otherwise how would they know where to strategically put all of the souvenir shops and food establishments to get the most people to buy each day? We both appreciate

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going, but we see the whole place differently. Ever since we were kids you’ve accepted that about me, why is today so damn funny? Why must you insist on laughing still?” he looks to his friend with more irritation. “Is this about your fiancé? Has he put ideas into your head? I know he doesn’t like me, but has he turned you against me now?” he looks to her with serious eyes.

Miley stops quickly now. She looks back at Hue, her oldest and dearest friend in the whole world. She even asked him to stand up in her wedding with her as her best man. She has no close female friends and he said he was happy to take the position. So, based on him wearing a suit, she picked out navy blue for all the other women to be wearing. All so he can get a suit to match and stand by her the whole wedding.

“Is that what you think? That he doesn’t like you? Hue, how could you say that?” Miley’s tears begin to fall even though moments ago she had been laughing.

Hue runs over to her to hold her. “How else should I interpret his constant questioning of what I do? His voice condescending,” he whispers into her head.

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“Oh Hue, I wish, after all these years of knowing me, that you would learn to trust people. Maybe this slight distrust of people is what has you so successful in your businesses, but in life, things don’t work like that. Hue, Eric, loves you almost as much as I do. He is thrilled you’re going to be in our wedding and even more thrilled to be learning from you; he is learning things he never knew about his own industry. You’ve given him great insight he didn’t have before. He questions you because you actually answer him as an adult and you don’t talk down to him like some other, so-called, mentors he has in his own place. He looks younger than his age and people always assume he is much younger, then, they talk down to him as if he doesn’t know anything and they’re the only ones who could possibly teach him. You’ve got this all wrong. All wrong,” she says finally looking up at her friend. “I’ll talk to him and ask him if he can ask fewer questions if you want,” she says after taking a deep breath.

“Maybe,” Hue pauses, “maybe we can sit down together in a professional meeting style and then I won’t hear things the same way, but in my living room I feel bombarded. Does that even make sense to you now?” he asks.

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“Yes, I understand that. Across a desk or table, the questions are where they should be. I’ll have him call you and schedule an appointment with you. Will that work?” she asks.

Hue holds his friend out at arms’ length. “No, I need to learn how to do this as much as you need to take life a little more seriously. Not through the office, have him call me personally, we’ll do lunch, that may help. Still not my living room. I promise I’ll work on how I see things but Miley, for me, the little things you appreciate are hard for me to see as worthy. I can only promise to try. Ok, I take that back, you can be as impressed over a sunrise or sunset as you want, they are pretty spectacular,” he grins down at her.

Miley gently hits Hue on his chest, “Yeah, we’ve seen some pretty awesome ones up at the lookout downtown. Lunch makes sense, everyone has to eat, right? Why not with friends?” she says gingerly. “We should leave now, we’re going to be late for my dress fitting,” she grabs his hand and the two friends walk out of her apartment.

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May is looking forward to her day today. One of her favorite clients is coming in for a dress fitting,

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and that is great all by itself, but this particular client comes in with her best man as opposed to coming in with her giggling girlfriends. May doesn’t know what to do with giggling women, having never been one herself.

May never tires of making the perfect dress for someone’s wedding, she tries to make their vision. She prides herself on her ability to give each client the look they have always wanted to have on their special day. Years ago, when May was only in high school, her great aunt taught her everything she could ever want to know about sewing and making things from scratch. This was the best gift she had ever been given. When she graduated high school with honors, her great aunt bought her one of the best sewing machines that was available at the time. Other people received money from relatives, or luggage to take to college, but to May, her machine was the only thing she wanted to receive. She still uses the same one today.

She immediately began working in her great aunt’s store after high school and upon her aunt’s passing, a few years ago, May took over the store. Her clients come from all over. Some of them she has known for years. Her great aunt took a step back when May started working there and allowed her to

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grow in her own way. She taught May things no one ever bothered to teach her in a classroom. She learned texture by touch as well as all of the colors of her grey scale rainbow so that she can easily identify each hue and which color it is portraying. This was the hardest part of her learning.

The day May was diagnosed as being color blind, her mom cried and cried. May took this in stride, she had already known things were different about her but she never seemed to care. However, if you would have heard her mother talk about this though, this day was the worst of the worst in her life as well as May’s.

When they came home from the eye doctor that day, her mom had asked her if she wanted to go clothes shopping to buy things that were easier to match. Asked May if she wanted to change her room from the pastels to brighter colors. May had said no to all of this nonsense. The following night her great aunt had come over for dinner. May and her aunt were always close. Even though she was considered a great aunt on the family tree, she really wasn’t very old, May’s mother married young and had her children right away, her great aunt was only in her late forties when she became a great aunt. May’s mother and aunt, despite their ten year difference in

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age, were also very close so she called her for dinner so she could break the news to her in person.

May remembers this night as if it only happened yesterday. When her great aunt walked in, her mom burst into tears. Again. May’s mom always sees loss in everything around her, she never sees the blessings she has, only the losses. By the time she calmed down and got the information out, May’s great aunt began to laugh and say, “So am I, what’s the big deal? So is my brother.” May’s mom had stopped dead still and stared at her aunt saying, “But you sew, you’re a seamstress even, and a damn good one at that. How can that be?”

“Listen my dear niece, color blindness doesn’t make you stupid. Sure, there are some disadvantages but only if you choose to accept them. My own mother, your grandmother, made it her life’s mission to make sure I understood the colorful world around me. She would say things are this color or that and I would put that shade into my memory bank. Some colors aren’t grey as you assume but they aren’t as bright as they may appear to everyone else, either way, she worked hard on making sure I knew them all. We went to the zoo countless times to see the beauty in nature, mostly the birds because of their color variety. The botanical gardens too,

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depending on the season. Shopping became a game for me, which shirt would match which bottom. She allowed me to get any of the outfits I matched myself. When she saw that I used to doodle and always drew clothes with more care than I drew my people, she found the best seamstress in town at the time and paid them to teach me all there is to know. The rest is history.” She smiled at May and said, “If you’re interested, I’ll teach you all the colors of your rainbow any time.”

May smiles at the memory of her great aunt, at the time, she loved to hear that she had her own rainbow, her great aunt made everything seem special. She spent many hours and days working with her on colors alone. When she mastered those, she was given a set of colored pencils from the art store and told to learn to use them. Her art teacher in school encouraged her also. Only after he began to encourage May to pursue a career in the arts, did she tell him she was color blind. He smiled and told her, don’t worry, Beethoven was partially, if not completely, deaf and look at the music he created.

Only at home did people treat her as if she had some major disability. When she designed and made all the bride’s maid dresses for her cousin’s wedding, everyone began to believe her, that she had

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equal abilities to their great aunt. Since then, her family has been asking for her to work on all their affairs. They also assume they are getting a family discount, but May set them straight on that. She can’t do entire wedding parties for nothing, her costs alone are a lot and her time is worth something too. The client coming in today is one of her sister’s old friends from before college. Well, according to her sister they were friends, but according to the client, her sister treated them like garbage all through high school and into college. But this client, Miley, has made a name for herself and May’s sister was in the store when she came in and became very excited to see her, much to the chagrin of Miley.

May learned the truth from her client quickly, because she said there were many people who wanted to know her best man, Hue. They all had a crush on him during their years of high school and then again in college. The two of them are both very successful, however Miley told May there is a group of people who gave them a hard time during their younger years who are all still trying to become part of either of their industries by claiming friendships to them. Mostly because they haven’t been able to make it on their own, due to their lack of ability or lack of drive. One of the things people

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gave them a hard time about was how focused on their education both Miley and Hue were, and not focused on going out to have fun with them as often as the group wanted. Miley told May that her sister, in particular, used to write her nasty letters about how she would never make her way in life and also about how she should step aside and let a real woman date Hue. No one knew they were never dating, they are best friends with no benefits, ever. Real best friends. Neither of them corrected people, it simply wasn’t worth their time.

May approached her sister and asked her what she knew about Miley to see if the stories matched. Her sister told her that Miley owns her own business and that she, her sister, has asked numerous times for a job, applied several times to the openings Miley advertises for and has always been turned down. Then she told May that if May takes her on as a client it is May’s job, as a sister, to get her a job working for Miley’s company. May remembers looking at her selfish sister saying, “No, if you need a job, get one on your own merit. If you don’t have a good enough resume, then do something about that.”

Since taking on Miley, her sister has tried to show up numerous times claiming she is in the

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neighborhood. She once caught her sister looking at her appointment book, so now she writes Miley’s name in code so her sister doesn’t know when she is going to be here. May never got along very well with her sister and now, as adults, they certainly don’t see eye to eye on how to live a successful life. If only she could speak to her great aunt today. She would ask her, how she can get this man to look at her as other than a seamstress with bad eyes? No clients ever know. She doesn’t tell them. Even the ones she gets close to. This is part of her training too, never show a client your weaknesses, and they will never know, her great aunt would tell her. Every so often she hears that mantra in her head from her great aunt. May considers herself very blessed with her skills. Her sister, only sees her faults, as did her mom. Interestingly enough though, her sister never sees her own faults.

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Hue and Miley pull up into the parking lot of the seamstress and before they get out of the car, they see someone off to the side. “Aw damn, she is here again. What a pest,” Miley says.

Hue looks over and sees who she is talking about, one of the people from their past, a woman

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who used to terrorize Miley with insults that went way past being funny, but now she wants a job from Miley. They figured out that the seamstress and this woman are sisters but don’t seem to have a close relationship at all. He speaks first, “Tell her to show up and meet with your software director, he will chew her up and spit her out before the interview is over, but at least you can feel good that you gave someone a chance they never would have had otherwise. Even if they don’t deserve said chance,” he smiles.

“Why Hue, is that a joke?” she laughs.

“Only partly. If I know Grant, he really will give her the hardest test she has ever had and if memory serves me correctly, she slept her way through many of the computer programming classes she took, so this is her only way of proving she can be something other than a bimbo. I almost feel sorry for her, she thought her looks alone would get her someplace in real life but all they have given her is a reputation. Come on Miley, we’re better than this. Rise above, then you can say to Grant as much or as little as you want about who she is. Otherwise, every time we come for some fun times in getting your perfect dress, it will turn into stress about the past and weddings are about fun and future. On top of

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that, I hate when you stress eat, you’re sloppy,” Hue smiles again.

Miley lets out a big laugh, “I don’t know what has gotten into you Hue, but I like this part of you. I see that Eric has been influencing you now with his crazy sense of humor. Ok, we’ll play your way, but I’m going to call Grant from the car here and then tell her when to show up to meet him.”

Miley gets out of the car laughing still. At the door, the seamstress’s sister is out of her car and calling to them. “Miley! Hue! So good to see you again. You still letting my sister do your gown? That’s very nice of you,” she says somewhat condescendingly.

Miley looks to Hue who smiles, he heard what Grant had to say and knows that this woman will certainly be put through the test all right. Miley takes a deep breath and looks at her and says, “Well, she is the best there is and I deserve the best. I certainly can afford the best for myself too. Perks of being hard working and successful,” she says as a dig to this woman.

“Well, I suppose you can with your own software company. You build educational systems, don’t you?” she asks.

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“Some, we do what the client needs and asks for. What are you working on these days?” Miley asks.

“I’m kind of between jobs at the moment. I was hired on a project basis and my current project is over, so I’m waiting for that client to need me again. They will call soon, I’m sure. How do your programmers work?” she asks hintingly.

“We only have salaried employees. I don’t like project employees, they don’t have any loyalty to me or our brand,” Miley says staring her down now.

“On the other hand, many project workers will do more for you to make sure they stay on,” she rebuttals.

Miley has had enough small talk; this woman is beginning to annoy her even more. Hue puts his hand on her shoulder and squeezes it gently to help her calm down. “What do you want anyway? This isn’t the first time you’ve popped up when I’ve had a *private* appointment here. I’m certain that the seamstress doesn’t give out my appointment time because that would make her lose a client.”

“As I said, I’m between jobs and...”

Before she finishes the sentence, Miley quips, “Call this number and ask for Grant, he will give you an interview. Our testing process is very

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extensive so you’d best study up. We only hire those who pass the written *and* computer testing with above an eighty-five percent. Each, not cumulative. No testing between the sheets happens at my place or those involved are fired immediately,” Miley turns, grabs Hue’s hand and pushes open the door.

“Miley! What the hell did you say to my sister? I’ve never seen her looking so shocked in her life. Looks good on her actually,” May laughs. “Come, I’ve redone your whole skirt, I didn’t like what was there before. I spent the past three days doing the hand sewing that was necessary to make your dress even more unique, I hope you like the results,” May says all in one breath as she walks them into the room where the bride tries on the dress.

She has a special room set up for brides only, the place where the bride can stand in the middle of a group of mirrors surrounding her so she can see all around herself in one glance. The place where she stands is a mock-up of a gazebo/bridal canopy. This way, the bride gets to see exactly what everyone will see on her special day, back and front. Some of them have even decided which way they want to face during the ceremony based on this.

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Miley comes out of the dressing room with tears in her eyes, “Oh Hue, look at me,” she says softly.

“Wow, Ms. May, you’ve done a great job here. How much extra does this cost? Whatever the difference, I’ll pay,” Hue says.

May looks at Hue, “Oh, this isn’t extra, this is what I always envisioned for Miley. I was simply bringing each piece to fruition. Sometimes I change my mind, nothing extra,” she says.

“No, this is way beyond what you drew on paper. I remember the picture exactly because I mentioned to Miley that she would look better in something with a lower waistline. Didn’t I Miley?” Hue asks while still staring at the workmanship on this dress.

“He did. Why did you change this? Not that I don’t appreciate your changes mind you,” Miley adds in.

“First of all, call me May. Not Ms. After confirming with my sister who you are, I realized that she must have done to you what she had always did to me, only I accepted her garbage because, she was, well is technically, my sister, flesh and blood and all that. But you? You deserve the best for not punching her lights out. I know I would have a few times, had I

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been able. Well, maybe not. I never did anything up until now,” she says the last part more to herself than to her clients.

“Ok, May. Listen. Your sister is her own worst enemy. She developed a reputation in high school and then again in college, and to be honest, it was anything but flattering. So, that look on her face today is because I, well,” Miley looks down at the gown again and becomes completely mesmerized. She can’t stay angry in this dress. This is something of an art piece. Her very own art piece.

Hue finishes her sentence and tells May the conversation in the car as well as what was said to May’s sister. “I’m sorry if we crossed the line. I hope you can forgive us,” he says.

May looks at him and laughs, “Oh my. I’m sorry I didn’t take a picture of her face. My sister always felt she was the prettiest, smartest and most deserving of all of us. She is the oldest, that is true, but definitely not the smartest. My brother can outdo anyone in math. He became an engineer, then was bored and became an architect. He is an engineering consultant for fun and has a job working for NASA now. But according to my sister his job is playing with astronauts and therefore not a job at all.

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She can shoot down anyone in her way even though their paths never cross professionally. This is how she has always been. The next brother is a dancer. He uses his body to entertain the world, and to her that is also a job where he simply plays at being an adult. Then you have me, the baby of the family. I have my own faults as well.” May takes a breath and in a very mumbled tone she says ‘I’m color blind’ then she walks out of the room to collect herself. She bows her head to the wall and stays there a moment. “Pull yourself together May. They didn’t hear you. But why did you tell them anything? This is not like you,” she chastises herself in front of this mirror. “They are clients, now go back in there and pretend this never happened. Go get the veil.” May listens to herself and walks back into the room with her clients holding the veil.

“Ah, now that you have the full dress on. You need to try on the veil I have prepared especially for you. Every bride needs a hand sewn veil to accent her natural beauty,” May says cheerfully as she does with all her bridal clients. May pins on the veil from behind Miley and takes a step back. This is one of her best bridal gowns yet. She will have to ask for some pictures.

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“Would you mind if I took a couple of pictures for my scrapbook?” May asks.

Hue has not stopped staring at her since she got into the room. He heard what she said, but he is also sure that she does not know he heard. Her work is amazing. They chose her because of what others had said about her and then when they saw in her portfolios and scrapbooks, they were dually impressed. How does she do this being color blind? Hue is very intrigued. What does this all mean? That she only sees in black and white? Doesn’t make sense, he will have to look this up to understand her better.

Miley looks at herself in the mirrors, “Oh Hue, look at me. Can this be real?” she asks again with tears in her eyes.

“Your dad would have loved this Miley. He would laugh and tell you that you look like an angel on top of a cloud,” Hue smiles back.

“Wow, that’s a beautiful sentiment Hue,” May says.

Miley watches as the tears drop from her cheeks to her dress, she can’t move. Hue is right, that is exactly what her father would have said. “Hue,” she says softly.

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“Yeah,” he pauses, “May, maybe we should get her out of the dress before her tears ruin the silk,” he says.

“It’s not silk. It won’t ruin. I promise you that. I take pride in getting only material that can handle a few tears and even a few mascara drops, because what bride doesn’t have a few of those?” she smiles.

“You are incredible May; this is beyond my vision of myself. How do you do this? Make each person feel as if they are the most special person around?” she asks.

“Part of the job is making a client look good, but with clothes you also have to make them *feel* happy. My great aunt taught me there is a difference. I hope I achieved this for you,” May says quietly.

“I believe you’ve done that and more,” Hue says looking at Miley in the mirror. “Eric won’t know what hit him when he sees you walk down the aisle Miley. I’ll be sure to be there to pick him up. No one will outshine this bride that is for sure,” he smiles at his good friend.

~ ~ ~

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Four days later, Miley is sitting in her office when Grant comes by, he knocks, “Mind if I come in?” he asks.

Miley looks up from her desk. “What’s going on?” she asks.

“Your old friend came in yesterday,” he says as he sits down.

“Ok, how did that go?” she asks hoping for the worst but also for the best, what a waste of an education if you can’t do the job you’re trained for.

“Um, well. How can I put this?” he asks.

“Bluntly,” she says.

“The woman is crazy. We gave her the same test we give all new programmers, she sat at the computer doing the test and didn’t shut up the whole time. Every ten or so minutes she loosened a piece of her clothing claiming it was hot, so I turned the fan on high and told her to button up because the room will soon get cold, and I walked out.

We watched from the other room to see if she was cheating. No, she sat there staring at the computer. Occasionally writing something down on the paper in front of her and looking back at the computer. If the program worked a congratulatory picture of fireworks would have come on the screen.

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Instead, she produced a birthday cake,” he looks at Miley.

“Which means?” she asks.

“That she is about as dumb as could be. A birthday cake is only produced on the simplest of programs. Had she looked further she would have produced something more inventive but clearly, she didn’t or can’t. We watched as she sat back impressed with herself. I waited another few minutes before I went back in to see how things were going,” he pauses, “Her first question to me was when she gets to see you. I laughed. I couldn’t hold that in. Sorry,” he looks to Miley who is smiling. He looks at her cautiously.

“Grant, remember me telling you about a woman in college who thought she was better than me in all things?” she asks.

“Sure, you said you and Hue used to ignore her and laugh at how sad her life had become because she couldn’t do anything without getting a professor’s attention first. Oh crap, is this the same one? No wonder you sent her to be tested by me and not the first-string interviewers. Oh, hell Miley, she learned nothing, and has kept up nothing as well. Why did you send her in then, feels like you knew this would go bad?” Grant says.

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“Did you show her what she was supposed to produce?” she asks.

“No, we never do. Why?” he says.

Miley thinks about how talented her sister is. How far she has made it as well as the other siblings, it is time someone show this woman that she is not as much as she thinks she is. “I want you to call her back and tell her that she has to come in to see the results of her test. Then I want you to be brutally honest with her and tell her that she was given a favor by having her test with you and not the first-tier programmers, after that, show her what she should have been able to do as a programmer who is over eight years out of college. I want you to honestly make an example out of her and put her in her place. Take her pride down,” Miley’s voice is much louder by the time she finishes her rant.

“Listen, you’re the boss, but do you really want me to waste my time with this?” Grant asks.

“Grant, I want to show you a picture,” she takes out her phone and shows him a picture of her wedding dress that Hue took.

“Wow, Miley, this is incredible. I mean really, really incredible. Who is your seamstress?” Grant asks.

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“That woman’s younger sister, who thinks her sister does mediocre work, they have a brother that works for NASA and she thinks his job is about playing with astronauts, and another brother who is a dancer at one of the most famous theaters in the country, I’d hate to hear what she thinks of him. Yes Grant, yes, I want you to take her down a few notches and not necessarily in a nice way. Ok, my inner bitch is coming out and I don’t care anymore. I’ve taken all I can from her, it is time she woke up to some reality,” she looks at him in the eye.

“Can you submit your dress to Hue’s cousin, the costume designer? After the wedding of course. This piece needs to be showcased in a museum or something,” Grant looks at the picture again from all sides, making the photo larger and looking at the detail once more.

“That sounds perfect. Do the call back in the conference room so I can watch please. Maybe I’ll come in at the end and say I can’t hire her in person. Or not, we will play this by ear,” she says.

“Ok. But we don’t want to get a reputation of being harsh interviewers,” Grant says.

“Grant, even if she did amazing, we don’t have a job for her and we would have said, thanks, we will keep your resume should we have an opening

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and call you then. It is not much different than what we did for Alfred, we asked him back because both of us saw potential in him and we gave him a chance to learn on the job, he has been great. But she has no potential, she needs to figure out her life already. You and I started this place five years ago even though you still call me the boss and we are currently supporting eighteen families I’d say we’ve done damn nicely, don’t you?” she looks to Grant with a smile on her face.

“I’d say we’ve done more than nicely. Yeah, we’re going to make good on this. If we stay small, we will always produce a great product. Then we can sell out to some big conglomerate and retire early and walk away happy,” he laughs. “I’ll let you know when she is coming back in,” he says as he walks out

Miley sits and looks at the pictures of herself in her wedding dress. Grant is right, this is museum worthy. She will send the picture to Hue’s cousin now and get her opinion.

Moments later her phone rings. “Where did you get that?!! I’m in love, no that isn’t right, I’m envious as could be. Miley you are going to knock Eric right off of the gazebo, he will fall over completely and literally. I’m certain. The details, the

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workmanship, all of this is beyond amazing. Please tell me your source,” she pants excitedly.

“I went to a woman named May. She learned from her...”

“Great aunt. Oh my, Miley, sure I know May. She is as good as her great aunt was. Maybe even better. Seriously, I didn’t think it possible, but yes, very possibly even better than the master. The student has clearly surpassed the teacher. You can feel the love that went into this beading and lace, did you look at that lace? That is hand made as well. You must be paying a fortune for this kind of work,” Hue’s cousin goes on and on about all the details she sees in the dress. Miley had no idea any of this was possible. Hand done lace?

“How can you tell all of this by looking at a picture?” Miley asks.

“I’ve never seen that lace, ever, in all of my costume work, not once. I’m about twelve years older than May, I know that when she gets an idea in her head, she can’t let go, she has to create what she sees in her mind. What she did for you is out of love Miley. Really. This dress screams love. You’ll have to ask her if she wants it displayed in the museum though. Some people don’t,” she says.

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“But I bought the dress, can’t I do whatever I want with what is mine?” Miley asks

“Usually, but these kinds of things make the artist/designer very prickly. May designs for the client, not for public viewing. This is how she might see her work. Not everyone thinks having something on display in a fashion museum is an honor. Really, Miley, you’ll have to ask permission. I won’t do anything without May’s signed permission. Also, being on display allows for people to take pictures of the lace, and if she wanted to sell that design as original, someone else might beat her to the punch and copywrite it,” she says.

“Really? Who would do that?” Miley asks in disgust.

“Anyone who recognizes that it is hand done and wants to capitalize on the style. Design originals are hard to prove once something is public. You’ll have to accept my word on the fact that I’ve had many designs stolen this way,” the cousin says.

“Wow, I thought my industry was cutthroat, but yours sounds worse. Ok, I’ll discuss the idea with May. Or maybe you should after you see me at the wedding?” Miley asks.

“No, honey, I won’t impose like that. Talk with her. I’m assuming you’re having a final fitting

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soon. The wedding is in eight days. Invite her to the wedding. Let her hear the praise you get,” she says.

“Ooo, great idea. Love you. See you next week!” Miley calls into the phone.
~ ~ ~

Hue can’t get May out of his mind. All day long his thoughts are on her. Why is that? She is a pretty woman, that much is true, younger than him but that’s never mattered to him. What is it about her that has him so tied in knots? He needs a reason to see her. “Ah, the wedding!” he says out loud to his office.

“Hello?” May answers her phone.

“Hello, this is Hue, Miley’s best man. I’m calling to make a request if possible. As the best man I was supposed to get her a dress to leave the wedding in since they are going straight to a plane. I am remiss in my duties. Is there time for you to make something special for her to leave the party in? If not, don’t worry, I’ll go buy something,” Hue says.

“Oh, I forgot to ask about that. Oh my, seems we are both remiss. Um, any color in mind?” she asks.

“Her wedding color is navy blue but I’d rather see her in something happier than that.

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Something simple to throw on after she gets herself out of the gown,” he says.

“Um, let me think. I have some greens and oranges laying around. Maybe some purple too. Ok. I’ll let you know by end of the day today whether or not I can pull this off and make something look good. I don’t want you to wait too long, then you’d be rushed in having to find her something in a store. I have her measurements, I can work from the dummy I made for the gown. Do you have a proper bag to hang the gown in afterwards? Who is taking it after the wedding?” May asks all her questions quickly, more out of curiosity than being noseey.

“My job again. Seems best man gets a plethora of jobs to do that maids of honor don’t get. But no worries, we have things all worked out. I’m going to be called to the room where she is changing and take the gown immediately from her,” Hue answers.

“Oh, that is very smart. I’ll give her a special bag for the dress, you need one with enough space that the dress won’t need to be pressed hours before the wedding. One less thing to do,” May says, so happy to be talking to Hue by himself. Even for these couple of minutes.

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“You think of everything. I want the dress to be kind of be a surprise so I’ll come early to the last fitting and take the new dress to my car before she sees what I’ve done, well, what you’ve done actually. How does that work?” he asks.

“Like I said, I’ll let you know what I can do by tonight. Is this the number to call you on?” she asks.

“No, this is my office, but the first numbers are all the same, the last four are 8734, that is my cellular phone,” he smiles knowing she will call him tonight.

“I look forward to talking to you later. Let me go get to work,” she says.

“Speak to you later,” Hue says.

Hue hangs up and wonders how she can pull off a dress with those three colors. It doesn’t sound like they will match at all but after seeing the wedding dress, he is taking a chance. Part of him is looking forward to talking with her again tonight.

May runs to her drawing room. She knows she has a lot of material scraps laying around but this is someone’s wedding, she can’t send her out in a hodge podge mess. Simple he says, but Miley deserves elegant, she exudes it. Is that even a thing? Simple and elegant together? Miley begins drawing,

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erasing, and drawing again. Her stomach begins to rumble and she realizes that time has flown away from her, the clock reads 9:40 already. Oh no, she has to call him back. Quickly she runs to the back room where she keeps all of her scraps and she thumbs through them all. Her fingers work fast to find the right fabric, the right softness for a new bride. She sees four different colors in front of her now.

She checks the fabrics again and measures them, she has enough of two of them, she can use the third for some finishing touches, the fourth she puts back on her shelf. Now she sits down to call Hue.

“Hello,” a groggy voice says.

“Oh, no. I woke you. How late is it?” May says, she looks at the clock and is shocked by how much time has passed, all she did was eat a piece of fruit and look for fabrics, the clock reads 10:30.

“10:30, May? You could have called me in the morning,” he says softly.

“I promised you tonight, and I only found all the material a minute ago, I assumed my search didn’t take this long. I can call you back in the morning,” she says quickly.

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“No! Don’t hang up. I was sleeping at my desk anyway. I should go upstairs. I do have a bed, but sometimes I get caught up in work and forget to make my way upstairs. Talk to me while I’m going up,” Hue says.

May describes what she has drawn and the materials she plans on using. “Can you send me a picture of the drawing?” Hue asks.

“Oh sure, hold on,” May positions the drawing with the fabrics around it so he can see both, snaps the picture and sends the photo to Hue. “Let me know what you think.”

Hue holds his phone in front of him and looks down. The dress is simple, and yet looks great even in a sketch. But to him, this is complicated. “Are you sure you can make this in these four days before the last fitting?” he asks.

“This? This will most likely be done in less time than that. Not much to it. So, if you approve, I’ll get started right away,” May says.

“Approve? May this is not a simple dress. Let me know in two days if you can’t get this done. No hard feelings, I’ll understand,” Hue says still staring at the dress, talking to her on speaker.

“Ok, that sounds like a reasonable plan. I’ll call you in two days and let you know how far I’ve

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gotten,” May hangs up and looks at her drawing again. “I should be able to do this, not much different than a few others I’ve made. Ah, but he wouldn’t know that May,” she says to herself.

May sits down with all the material and begins to measure each piece out. Her phone chimes and she looks at the text. *‘If you need anything from me along the way, let me know.’* Hue sends.

‘Ok,’ she answers because she doesn’t know what else to say.
~ ~ ~

May’s sister comes in for her second interview. “I’m here to see Grant and Miley,” she says with confidence.

The receptionist looks over her desk at the woman in front of her, “That so? You don’t even have the job and you feel you can address the owners by their first names. Interesting. I’ll let them know you’re here. Sit over there,” she points to a chair that is down the hall a bit.

The receptionist calls Grant to let him know what has transpired. “Good work Peg. I’ll come and get her in about fifteen minutes,” he says.

Peg sits back down at her desk and ignores the woman at the end of the hall. After about half the time has gone by the woman comes back to Peg’s

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desk. “Is there a problem? I believe my interview was for 10:00 this morning,” she says.

“That may be, and kudos to you for being on time. Now please sit back down and wait until one of those people you mentioned has the time to come get you,” she looks back at her computer and waits for the woman to finally go back to the chairs. She sits with a huff.

A young man comes walking up to Peg, “I have an interview this morning,” he says quietly.

“Yes, follow me,” Peg says.

“Hey, my interview was for 10:00!” the woman down the hall yells.

“Yes, and he is interviewing with someone else, is there another problem?” Peg asks. She sits back down and Peg brings the young man to the room where his interviewer is waiting for him. She would love to tell this woman he is interviewing for a janitorial position and she is welcome to apply too, but she didn’t want to embarrass the guy. He looks nervous enough.

After fifteen minutes on the dot, Grant comes back out, “Follow me.” Is all he says to her. She gets up and follows him, looking back at Peg with an attitude of seniority. “Sit,” he shows her a chair in the conference room. He then pulls up a

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chart from her test a few days ago. “Does this problem look familiar to you?” he asks.

“That is the problem I solved during my interview,” she says smugly.

“Did you now? Let’s look at this together, shall we?” he turns on the large screen on the wall and pulls over a keyboard for himself. “Problem number one, this is your answer,” he says and looks at her for confirmation. Then he proceeds to do the problem on the large screen. “This is the correct answer, did you follow how I got there?”

“Yes, of course. I see the difference now,” she says still trying to command confidence.

“Problem two, your answer,” he pauses and then again does the problem on the large screen, “Mine.” This continues for all twenty problems, a few she had right he congratulated her on. At the end, he says, “This is what your answers produced and you seemed quite proud of yourself at the end. However, this is what is supposed to happen,” he plugs in all of his answers he had and she sees a man lighting fireworks and then they go off in bright, animated colors saying congratulations. She stares at the screen.

He watches as she realizes this is not a second interview. “Bottom line? We are not the

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place for you. The work we do is clearly past the scope of what you learned how to do. I’m afraid I don’t even have an entry level position for you at this time. I hope you learned something from this review today,” he says staring at her, daring her to deny the quality of her work.

Miley walks in, “All done here? We need the conference room by 11:30,” she looks to Grant who nods.

“You set me up! This is a joke to you, you couldn’t beat me in college so you send your goon here to humiliate me! That’s playing very low even for someone like you,” she crosses her arms in front of her chest.

“Ms. you have an awful lot of nerve saying that. You took the same exam as all of our potential programmers take. In fact, your old friend, as you called her before, sent you to me directly, the other *owner* of this business, instead of the first-tier programmer exam. Had you passed that first one, you would have had to take this one anyway, and you still would have failed. This is your own doing, no one else’s. Your behavior was disgusting in the room while I was in there as well. We’re not in high school anymore and your looks aren’t that good for you to be trying to use them to get a job. Especially with me.

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We’re done here, don’t come back any time. If I hear that you’ve decided to bad mouth our company, I’ll remind you that both the testing and this interview were being taped, you signed off on doing that. Plus, we have all the evidence we need to show who is really behaving badly here. Kindly leave and take your attitude with you. High school is over, time to grow up,” Grant is standing with the door open and had pushed Miley protectively behind him.

May’s sister walks out without acknowledging anyone in the room. She walks by the receptionist and as she continues to walk, she hears laughing. She turns to see the receptionist laughing at her. She runs to her car, the sounds of laughing ringing in her ears.

Her first thought is revenge. The wedding, she thinks to herself. She runs over to May’s place. She will find the dress and put some snags in the right places, the kind that are hard to see but will show up after she puts the dress on her body. “Ha, who has the last laugh now Miley, bitch!” she yells into her car.

She walks in and is stunned into silence. Hue is standing there next to her sister holding a dress. Who could that be for? This dress has all of her favorite colors. She must be making this for me and showing it off. Hmmm, maybe my sister is useful

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after all. She thinks to herself and walks closer to them.

“Good afternoon Hue,” she says.

Hue turns to see May’s sister, he also knows exactly where she is coming from. Miley told him all about the interview as soon as it happened. Hue looks at her suspiciously. She came here to get back at Miley, he can tell, he can see revenge in her eyes. He explained this to May only moments ago as he got off the phone with Miley, this is why he already put the gown in his car and is taking the wedding gown and this dress with him today. He knew her to be vindictive and this only proves his theory. She is wearing the same outfit Miley told him she was wearing when she left.

May looks to her sister, “Why are you back here? I’m with a client,” she says in a serious tone.

“Not really your color Hue, is it?” she asks.

“Crawl back under your rock, will you? Now leave us alone. You’re not a client and this is a private matter,” Hue says in a harsh tone.

“Are you going to let him talk to me like that May?” she looks at her sister.

“The client is always right. You’re making him uncomfortable and I’m not sure why you’re here again this week. I have nothing for you. I can’t

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give you a job, you can’t even cut a straight line, let alone sew a hem, and my phone doesn’t ring enough for the need of a secretary. Go call your brother, maybe NASA has an opening somewhere,” she turns back to Hue who is smiling at her encouragingly.

She has never spoken her mind to her sister, somehow his presence has given her the courage to do what she needed to do a long time ago. That, and the fact that her showing up here right now is proving Hue is right about her wanting to come ruin Miley’s dress, and that makes May angrier than she has ever been.

“You take that back right now! I’m your older sister and you’ll treat me with respect!!” she yells at May.

“Even siblings need to *earn* respect,” Hue says and then he sends a message on his phone to someone.

“Telling Miley I’m here? Can’t you two breathe without each other? What are you going to do now that she is going to be married, is there going to be a nightly threesome? Does the fiancé know about you or are you that closet friend she doesn’t tell anyone about?” she says.

Hue takes the dress and also puts his other hand on May’s elbow and leads her away from her

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sister. “I sent a text to my friend, he is a police officer, he will be here soon, and yes, May, it has gone that far. I’ve seen what she does when she gets vindictive. She is looking around the store for Miley’s wedding gown. If she can’t find it, she may damage your machine or something else important to you because you are dealing with us,” he says quietly to her ear.

May looks over at her sister, no, she couldn’t do that. Wouldn’t do that. Her own sister would ruin Miley’s dress? That can’t be true. Can it? She thought it before but now she watches as her sister begins to walk around and open some dress bags, she pulls out a sleeve or two. “What are you looking for?” May asks in a shaking voice.

“For the tags on the sleeves, no way you made these, you probably bought them from somewhere and are charging people a fortune claiming them to be your own. You’re color blind May, you can’t sew colored material. Check for a label Hue, that dress is most likely bought at some cheap thrift store so you won’t see the same thing anywhere else,” she grins thinking she has gotten the best of them both. She continues to look for Miley’s dress. There aren’t many here, she turns to Hue, “You took the dress already? Did Miley tell you to

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come and get her dress today because she was planning on humiliating me? Did she?! That bitch! I’ll kill her, you’re on the list too now May.”

“Is this the problem?” A deep voice from behind May’s sister says.

Hue shakes his head and the officer puts handcuffs on her quickly and begins to read her the rights she has and tell her she is being charged with threatening someone’s life and general public disturbance. The officer nods to Hue and walks May’s sister out to his squad car, she continues to yell threats at Hue, Miley and even at May. All of which are quite menacing.

May watches as her sister continues to yell and scream things to her that she never thought a sibling would say to her. May begins to shake, “She knows where I live, she knows how to get in too. She even knows my code for my bank card. There is not one thing about me she can’t destroy,” she puts her hand to her mouth to hold in what she doesn’t want to do in front of Hue.

Hue steps forward and pulls May in to his chest. He holds her there tightly. “No one will hurt you. You have my word. We have twenty-four hours to change things around for you, they will most likely

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hold her at least that long. Miley and I will help,” he says to her head.

May can only shake her head, her shoulders and now her legs give out and she slowly crumbles to the ground, but she is in Hue’s arms as this happens. He sits on the floor with her and lets her cry the tears she probably never cried with a sister like that. Hue holds on and won’t let her move from his lap.

They stay there for quite a while.

When Miley comes into the store, she sees Hue and May on the floor. She knows what happened, their mutual police officer friend notified her, she waited a couple of hours before she came over. Hue notices her first. He nods and Miley comes over to join them on the floor.

She puts a hand on May’s back and says, “Here is the thing, I’m getting married in a few days but my lease isn’t over for another four months. I promise the landlord I’d pay him for the whole time. So, I paid in advance, but told him he isn’t allowed to put anyone else in there until the lease is up because I might need the place while my new place is being set up. That was a lie, I only said this to him because he made me pay him, and not let me sublet the place. I didn’t want him getting money twice on my dime.

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I’m glad I did that, because now I see that my new best friend May needs a place to stay for a little while. Long enough to get herself together in a new area,” her eyes meet Hue’s and she sees a tear in his eye. Oh Hue, you like her, really like her. Miley smiles at him in approval.

May sits up for a moment to gather herself. “Miley, I can’t pick up and leave, that’s a coward’s way out,” she says.

“No, cowards stay put thinking the same thing can’t happen twice, but it can, and she will. She doesn’t know where I live, and even if she does, she’ll never get passed my doorman. He still asks Hue for ID every time he comes in,” she laughs.

“She is my sister,” May says looking from one to the other.

“She is an underachieving self-proclaimed genius who thinks the world owes her something for her existence. But no one owes her a thing. No one. She has burned many bridges and will continue to do so until she learns to accept her own faults and starts trying to better herself. But she has made it almost thirty years without having to do that, why start now?” Miley continues, “May, after the dress you’ve made me, I owe you this much. You’re more than a

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seamstress to me. You’re my dream maker. I consider you a friend, a good one at that.”

“You paid me to make the dress, that’s my job Miley. I make dresses. Nothing special,” May says.

~ ~ ~

May is getting dressed for Miley and Eric’s wedding in Miley’s apartment. Hue and his police friend helped to move her in the day her sister was arrested. Hue even found her a new place for her business. Due to the reason for her leaving, her landlord allowed her to break her lease. The landlord used to have her great aunt’s business and always told May that she wanted to upgrade the store and get more money for the space. May’s great aunt had a long-term lease and it was coming to an end anyway in the not so distant future. Everyone parted on good terms.

Now she stands in a borrowed apartment helping her new friend get ready for her wedding. A dress she made. She wanted to get to know Hue better too but she seems to be on the same friend for life status as Miley is. This is not what she wanted. But what can she expect? She looks in the mirror and all she sees is faults, kinky hair, green eyes, color

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blindness, hips a little too big for her physique. Not educated past high school. No way Hue would ever have taken her seriously, she should be happy they are friends.

“Are we all packed?” Hue asks.

“Packed? You mean the gown? It’s right there Hue, what else needs to be packed?” Miley asks.

“Well, no good man of honor lets his best girl walk out in a wedding gown to a plane, you need something more spectacular for after the wedding. You can’t wear this to the airport,” he pauses, “but, you can wear this,” he says with pride, pulling out the dress May made. He looks to May and smiles proudly.

Miley smiles back. “You what!!? May you *are* the best friend a gal can have. All of my favorite colors. Oh darling, you are going to be bigger than ever now. A giant in seamstressing, if that is even a word.” She jumps over to May and hugs her. “Hue paid for this didn’t he?” she whispers in May’s ear. May nods.

She holds May at arm’s length in front of her, “He is the best, don’t let him go May,” Miley turns around and then jumps into Hue’s arms. He swings her around.

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“Ok gals, let’s get this show on the road,” he says.

They get into his car and head over to where the wedding will be. When they get there, a woman shows them to the bride’s room. “You’ll get dressed here, the room key will be in your hand sir and your hand only. I received your letter and all of that will be taken care of, I assure you.”

“For insurance, we hired a friend of mine to stand guard at this room, or he can stay inside, either way, he will be here the whole affair,” Hue says.

“Inside might be better if you don’t mind,” she says. “Anything else?”

“No, we are good here. Thank you,” Hue says.

“Hue?” Miley asks.

He sighs and says, “I hired my friend to guard the room. I trust no one. Sorry May,” he says.

May looks at him and then all of a sudden understands he is protecting Miley from her sister still. Hue looks at May and smiles a very heartfelt smile, she can feel his sincerity. May waits and waits until she can finally say, “Are we waiting for your mother?” she asks Miley.

Miley looks at her and smiles, they never told her. “No May, my mom died when I was thirteen,

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my father a few years ago. I have Hue here, I have you. I’m good,” she says.

May closes her eyes and takes a deep breath. She lost her mom years ago, her sister became worse after that, no one to stop her. A hand on her shoulder has her opening her eyes, Hue is standing before her. “No mother figure for your sister?” he asks.

“I was in my last year of high school, I moved in with my great aunt. Others were already away in college. We sold the house and split the money. I think she felt she deserved more. Father ran out on us when I was only five,” she stares at his eyes, why is she saying this to him?

“I was very close to my dad, Hue was there with me when he died. He has been with me for every one of life’s milestones. He is walking me down today too,” Miley says with pride.

Hue turns to Miley, “What?” he asks.

“Who else? My uncle? That man still pinches my ass every time he sees me,” she looks at Hue.

“Oh Miley, when the time comes, will you be my best man too?” he asks.

“In a heartbeat. Now let’s get that gown on me. I can’t wait to look fabulous,” she laughs.

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May helps Miley into the gown, she buttons the back up and adjusts how she is wearing it until the dress sits on Miley’s body perfectly. She sits her down and begins to do Miley’s hair as they had discussed. When she is done, May turns her around so she can see herself as a bride. Now for the veil.

“Oh May. Please tell me you’ll put this dress in the fashion museum. You have to. You took this plain girl and made her look like the queen of everything,” Miley says with tears in her eyes.

“There wasn’t much to do, with a woman as beautiful as you Miley,” May says.

Miley quickly turns to May, “That is a beautiful sentiment. Thank you May. For everything. For the dress, the second dress, for becoming my friend. For being you in my life right now. I can’t wait to spend the next thirty plus years with you around,” a large tear runs down her cheek and May catches it with a tissue from her pocket.

“Ok ladies, the party is waiting for our arrival,” Hue says. He puts out his elbow for Miley to take May gets behind her to help with the dress. As they walk out, his friend steps into the room. Hue nods to him and receives a nod back.

First they walk to where the photographer is waiting but Miley puts a stop to this, she tells him she

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doesn’t need a million pictures of herself, just a few good ones.

They walk to where the crowd is waiting for them now. Miley stands with Hue ready to walk down the aisle, she looks up and sees Eric standing there waiting for her, all eyes are on her as she begins to walk down in Hue’s arm. As they get closer, she can see Eric’s face, he has a tear running down his cheek as he watches her take the two steps up to the gazebo where they are to be married. Hue kisses her hand before releasing her to Eric. He hugs Eric and then walks back down to sit in the crowd next to May. He slides his hand under hers and slides his fingers in between hers. She looks over at him and he smiles.

There they sit through the whole ceremony.
~ ~ ~

Thankfully, the wedding ceremony finishes without any interruptions. Hue continues to hold May’s hand as they follow the new couple down the aisle after the ceremony.

Afterwards, the party is full of laughter and dancing. No one stayed in their seat at all. All the guests found time to dance at one point or another. Jokes were said all night into the microphone instead of toasts, just as the couple had asked of people.

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Before the new couple leaves, Miley changes into her other new dress, the crowd applauds her and screams of bravo are heard from everyone who sees the dress.

Everyone complimented Miley on her dress, she was the talk of the whole evening and the second dress left everyone wanting more. All night people asked who designed the dress. Hue proudly introduced May as the designer and seamstress of all the beautiful dresses Miley wore.

With the new couple gone, May gathers her things and heads back to the front lobby to catch a cab ride home. “Leaving without me?” Hue asks.

“I was going to catch a cab home. We live on opposite sides of town Hue,” in many ways, she thinks to herself.

“But the night is young and I’d love to take you someplace, if you don’t mind,” Hue says.

“Actually Hue, I think it is best if I go back to Miley’s apartment. I’m going to start looking for a new place. These few days have been nice, but I have to stand on my own two feet and not hide from my sister. I mean, she is my sister after all and shouldn’t that be first?” she asks.

“Please May, I have to show you this tonight, now in fact,” he says in a most sincere tone.

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“Ok,” she says reluctantly.

Hue is quiet in the car, he doesn’t tell her where he is taking her but he knows he has to take her tonight. Not a minute later either. After a while May begins to recognize where they are going, she feels as if he is taking her back to the store she left behind only days ago. Has it really only been days? May is not sure she knows what to feel right now.

The closer they get the more she hears sirens, a lot of them. They sound as if they are under them, she is not sure what is going on. Hue pulls over to what looks to be a lookout point for lovers. He gets out of the car and comes around to open the door for her, he gives her his hand and she gladly takes it for help out of the car. She smells the smoke before she sees the fire.

He walks over to the lookout point and points down. May knows where she is, she looks down and sees her old store on fire. Three fire trucks are there, she doesn’t have to be closer to see that the place is fully destroyed already. She puts a hand over her mouth, and Hue is right there behind her, “My friend told me he just got the call after Miley and Eric left. See her for who she is. Your sister will go to jail for this now. He told me they caught her watching the scene smelling like alcohol

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and ash. I’m sorry May. I’m so, so sorry,” he turns her to face him and without thinking he bends down and kisses her right on the lips. A soft, slow kiss.

The warmth of his tenderness is filling May up from her toes all the way up to her heart. Hue can’t find a way to let go, he doesn’t want to. This feels right. This feels as it should, complete. Hue finally pulls away. “I’m sorry, I didn’t ask you first,” he says.

“I didn’t know you saw me that way, well, you or anyone else for that matter. No one has done that to me, ever,” May says.

“Wow, I must be really bad at this showing emotion thing. Ever since I met you May you’ve been on my mind. I made up a reason to call you but then you came up with the most amazing dress and I was caught off guard. All I could talk about was your talent, I forgot to tell you how beautiful you are. Every day May, every day you become more beautiful. I want you to teach me what you know about colors. I want to see the world through your eyes because my eyes only see facts not feelings. Can you teach me?” Hue says breathlessly.

May looks up at Hue, “All this time I thought I was becoming a Miley replacement. A friend more accessible than a married friend. I never knew. I

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wanted to know, but never knew for sure. I’m not so special Hue. I’m an ordinary gal who was taught by a genius of a woman during my high school years. I never went to college. I’m not a well-rounded person unless you talk about my hips. I only know what I know, not much to learn from me,” she says.

“Oh May, you have everything wrong. It is I who am not special. I did everything that millions of others have done, I went to college, got a job and I work hard. But you! You took your talents, and your disability and you made a life for yourself by giving love to your work and making women feel they are beyond special on their wedding day or any day you make a dress for. You, you May, you make the world a better place and a place I want to live in. I want to live in it with you. I want to walk in a world of happiness because that is what you give to everyone around you. I want to be a part of that. Will you please be my girlfriend May?” Hue asks holding tightly onto May’s shoulder’s and holding her out so he can look into her eyes.

May looks down at the commotion and the pit in her stomach jumps to her throat, she turns to look at Hue, into his eyes and all she sees is sincerity. “I don’t have a lot of practice at this,” she responds softly.

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“Me either. We will learn that part together,” he looks down as her attention has turned again to the fire department. “I’m so sorry May, but I didn’t want you to see this on the news tomorrow. There are news vans down there too. I was hoping to protect you.”

May looks at Hue again, “Let’s give it a try and see where this takes us,” she says shyly. But most of her is a bundle of nerves from what she is seeing and feeling right now.

“Ok, but first I think I should take you back home,” he smiles.

“Miley’s home,” she corrects.

“No, it’s yours May, you have four months to stay there. By then, maybe we’ll have other plans.” he smiles and guides her back to the car.

~ ~ ~

Three days after Miley and Eric’s wedding, a night May will never forget, her brother calls her.

“May, what the hell is going on with our oldest sister? Jail? She says you wouldn’t bail her out. Can you tell me the truth? I don’t think I’m getting the real answer from her,” he says quickly.

May, for the first time in her whole life, doesn’t hold back, she lets him hear all of what she

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has been holding back, from childhood until three days ago. She finally comes up for air and says, “Is that enough information for you?” she asks sarcastically.

“Damn May, I wish you would have told us all along. We brothers pitched in together and decided we are sending you some money for your business, please don’t return it. Your lawyer called me yesterday and gave me some other information about your artwork. May, I’ve always loved your work. I hope you can take this to the skies.” He takes a deep breath, “I love you May dear. I’ve been an idiot and I can’t say that enough. We’re both sorry, Janey and me. If you’ll let us, we’d like to be more a part of your life now. Please,” he says cautiously. He is not sure how much May even knows about his wife.

“I’ll take the money, let’s work on the rest day by day. You can tell Janey that Hue and I are officially dating now. Maybe that will give her something to talk to me about, since that is definitely one place I’m lacking in experience and knowledge,” she says a little less sarcastically.

“I’ll ask you more about him another day. I’m happy for you May, really I am. We’ll come out

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your way in a week or so when I can get away. Spend a weekend, yeah?” he asks.

“That would be nice. But right now, I have to find a place to live. Not sure where I’m going to be living yet. I only have Miley’s apartment for four months,” she says.

“Explain that too please, clearly I’m behind in everything May.”

“Miley paid already for the last four months of her apartment’s lease. Before our beloved sister landed in jail, she attempted to destroy all I had, so Hue and his friend moved me into Miley’s place before that happened, less than a week before the wedding. They knew from college and had witnessed her vindictiveness before, they both were afraid she’d pull something on me. He also found me a new place for my business, so nothing was actually destroyed. They were the target to much of her vehemence. Don’t ruin this for me, or we won’t be talking much at all,” she says sternly.

“Whoa, take a breath May, I understand. I wasn’t trying to be rude. I know it came out that way, but that’s not what I meant. Sorry, really, I am. Damn I keep saying sorry to you. I don’t know if I can say the words enough, so bear with me. I’m happy you’ve made such great friends. Like I said

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before, I like the fact that you have some good friends now. I’ll have Janey call you about when a visit works for you. I, aw May, I’m so sorry for being a jerk. I do love you,” he says with his voice choking.

“Thanks. I’ll see you soon then,” she says.

May’s phone rings again, “Now what?” she asks annoyed.

“Am I pest already?” Hue asks. May explains the conversation she had with her brother only moments ago. “Is this the brother that works for NASA or the dancer?” he asks.

“The dancer actually. He means well, I suppose. I guess it’s not a terrible thing to accept the money from him and his wife, is it?” she asks.

“Only if you want to. If you don’t want it, we can refuse it from the bank. This is your decision. I don’t want anyone holding this over you later,” he says concerned now.

“Thanks Hue, I knew you’d put things in perspective for me. I don’t think he has any ulterior motive. He seemed sincere about wanting the business to thrive. I think they honestly never knew how she treated me, and part of that is because I never reached out to either of them to complain. That was wrong of me. I shouldn’t have taken her on all on by myself all these years. But they’d been gone

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for so long, I didn’t think it was wise to reach out. I thought maybe they would think I was a whiny brat, being the youngest and all,” May sits down on the couch. Then she chastises herself for doing so, it’s not your couch, she reminds herself.

“Can I come over? Or are you going into the shop today?” Hue asks.

“I handed over all my current projects yesterday. I was looking forward to the rest of this week so I can start looking for my own place. I’ve been working twelve-hour days to get the projects done in time. In other words, yes, you can come over. Whoever needs to reach me can call me on my cellular phone,” she responds.

“Actually, I’m in the parking lot, but I didn’t want to knock without any warning. It’s not nice,” Hue says.

“Great, stay there, I’ll be right down, we can go out for ice cream,” she smiles.

“Sounds great,” Hue says.

~ ~ ~

Miley and Eric come back from their honeymoon to be greeted at the airport by a smiling Hue standing next to May who is holding flowers. Miley runs to May’s arms. The two women scream as if they haven’t seen each other in years instead of

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days. May hands Miley the flowers and the two women begin to walk away from the men, giggling all the way.

“Well, looks like things are doing well here Hue,” Eric laughs as they follow their women.

“Yes and no,” Hue begins to explain to him what happened after the wedding and also how May’s brother called too and told her about some money coming.

“Aw Hue, when is this going to end?” Eric asks.

“My lawyer is on the ball, this guy found evidence of other problems the sister has, I’m not sure she is coming out any time soon. The lawyer calls me now every couple of days, I told him not to bother May, that I will be her liaison. If there is anything to tell her, I tell him to call her. Do you think this helps her? I mean, I want her to heal, not add more burden on,” Hue continues to talk as they walk to the car.

“Hue! Did you hear what May is doing? She is going to show my wedding dress in your cousin’s place!! Ahhh, I’m so excited. Her aunt told her how to secure her custom ideas and items so that no one will copy it without her permission. Like putting some kind of copyright on her designs. This woman

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is so damn smart. Ahh!! I can’t hold in my excitement. May is going to take on the world!” Miley screams in her excitement with her arms waving.

“Miley, I’m glad you’re happy about this but don’t blow it out of proportion. It’s one dress in one museum. Besides I also got two new clients from your wedding. That’s even better to me. Eric’s cousin Richard needs me to make something special for him and his Aunt Louise. I have my first meeting with Richard tomorrow at the new studio,” May says as they get into the car.

“Richard is an odd egg May. Don’t get me wrong, I’m happy for you but he is kind of...” Eric pauses

“Yes, he wants me to make him a dress Eric, I know exactly who he is. A client in need of a special garment, that is all I see,” May says succinctly. “My great aunt taught me about all kinds of people as well as all kinds of material I might be using and whom to use what for. It’s not about cutting and measuring, there is so much more to being a seamstress. But most people think all I do all day is cut material and sew pieces together,” she finishes exasperated.

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“Hey May, that’s not what I meant. I meant to tell you he is, well, persnickety. I mean he wants you to do the job, and yet, he will be in your face every step of the way. It wouldn’t surprise me if he wanted to pick out his own thread that you use. He only will wear very particular materials, I’ve been shopping with him before. I love Richard, I’m the first one he told about his cross dressing or whatever you call what he does. What event does he need a dress for? I hope I’m not missing something important in his life,” Eric asks.

May takes a breath “I’m sorry Eric, you understand. I feel I have to defend myself on everything. The lawyer told me it might happen because I have to defend all that I did for my mom and sister for so long. I feel, well most days, I still feel pretty crappy. I mean, it really makes you feel stupid, I was so busy doing my work that whatever she told me to do, I did to make life easier instead of causing arguments. We weren’t close when I was younger, and I guess I was holding on to a shred of love I thought I was feeling. That maybe, she had an ounce of actual feelings towards me too.

I still count my blessings I met you all. I might not have made it out in time with the fire,” she says.

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“No, that was my fault May. That whole part of your connection with your sister might not have happened if I wasn’t involved. I set her up in a matter of speaking to give her a reality check. I had no idea she would take her vengeful self to destructive behavior. I’m sorry.

Listen, I want to concentrate on all the good in life, like you and Hue are together for example. Like Richard being your client, let’s leave your sister out of the equation. So, have you found a new apartment yet or do you want to sign on where I live?” Miley asks.

“Oh Miley, your apartment has been a nice reprieve but I can’t afford that. I do well, for what I do, but it’s not owning a successful company with perpetual clients well. I’m going with Hue tomorrow night to see a few places,” May says calmly still not believing that Hue is in her life.

“Oh pooh, you can’t go with Hue, he is too serious and only looks for practical things, let me go with you so we can look at the beauty of things. Practical will follow,” she laughs.

“Hey, I take offense to that,” Hue says.

“Only because you know I’m right,” Miley laughs. “I have to check into work tomorrow and speak with Grant and see what is going on. Then you

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and me can go on a house hunt,” Miley says encouragingly to May.

“Hue?” May asks.

“I can meet up with you after work. Take my two favorite girls to dinner,” he smiles as he drives.

“Hey, what am I? Mush?” Eric exclaims.

“No, not mush, you are my husband. But you have to work late tomorrow, remember? I’ll make sure to have the whole place set up for both of us by the time you get home. Do you really mind if I go?” Miley asks Eric with concern.

“Na, but thanks for reminding me I have to work late. I was hoping to forget about all that. Hoping they will forget too, but I’m sure not. Ok, let’s go get ice cream before we head to our place,” Eric says and everyone laughs. “You know Miley, I love the sound of that phrase.”

“What phrase is that?” she asks

“Our place,” Eric smiles at her.

~ ~ ~

Moving day has come. Only six weeks after May’s life changed completely, she is now moving in to a new apartment only a few blocks from where Hue lives. She found the place on her own, can afford the whole thing on her own and is moving in on her own because Hue has a very big client to be

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meeting with today and Miley is finishing a project that she has everyone working on.

“Well, goodbye temporary apartment, you’ve been fun,” May says as she takes one more look around Miley’s apartment before she closes the door and heads to her car with the last of her belongings. Most of her important stuff she keeps at her new studio. The new place has twenty-four hour surveillance by real people, not only a robot eye. Everyone in that strip of stores has the same security. This part made Hue happy since she tends to work late at night, and alone.

May stuffs her car with all of her belongings and heads over to her new place. Her brother and she have been talking now each week. He made sure that she had no more burden having to do with their sister. Legal or otherwise. May’s phone rings as she pulls up to her new home. “Hello.”

“Hey sis, move in day. You excited?” he asks.

“As a matter of fact, I pulled in a second ago,” she says.

“Yeah, I know. Look to the left of your door,” he smiles.

May looks up and sees her brother for the first time in years. She jumps out of the car and runs

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into his arms. He lifts her up off the ground as if she was no bigger than a piece of mail. “You told me the address, I couldn’t resist. When you told me the date you were moving in, I ordered a ticket right away. We had our last performance last night and I ran out of the theater to make it here on time. You happy?” he asks cautiously. “Janey isn’t here, she will come soon. But today is for us two alone.”

“I wish Hue was here to meet you. You’ll love him. He reminds me of your first dance instructor, except Hue can’t carry a tune, or a rhythm,” she laughs. “Where’s your wife?” she asks.

“Sounds perfect for you May. She couldn’t get off work, but she told me I had to come. After I help you in with all your stuff can you take me to see this wedding dress you made? At the museum now? I bragged to all my friends about that dress. Showed the photo to the costume designers on the set and they were all enamored by the detail. Truly, they kept coming to ask me to see the photo again. But I wouldn’t give them the picture because I don’t trust them not to copy parts. Aw May, I’m so proud of you and all you’ve done,” he hugs her tightly again. “Janey said she is annoyed that we eloped, she would have wanted a one of a kind dress too,” he jokes.

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“Maybe I can make her an anniversary dress then, isn’t that coming up soon? Well, let’s get started then, the museum is only open until 2:00 today,” she smiles at him.

Having her brother with her makes the move go much quicker. Rand brings all the heavy stuff in first and even helps her unpack. When they finish, the two of them fall onto the couch laughing. “Rand, if I knew you’d make this move so fast, I’d have asked you to come myself. But the surprise is always nice. Thank you. When do you have to get back to the show?” she asks.

“May, didn’t you hear me? Last night was the last performance, I’m on to the next project. I hear they are having tryouts here in town too for the local performance arts theater. But first, we see the dress!” he calls with his hand in the air.

The knock on the door startles both of them. Protectively Rand stands first and has May stand behind him when they open the door. “Surprise!!” Rand opens the door even more so May can see who is there.

Standing before her is Hue, Miley, Eric and Eric’s cousin that became her client. May quickly makes introductions and everyone laughs. “We couldn’t let the day go without celebrating. We

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figured we would get here in time to help you unpack,” Hue says, now standing with his arm around May’s shoulders.

“It was all Hue’s idea, you’re a good influence on him May,” Miley laughs.

“Well, Rand is amazing at unpacking apparently but we were headed over to the museum, he wants to see your dress in person,” she smiles.

“Good idea, a picture is not the same as the real thing,” Eric agrees, “I nearly fell over watching her come down the aisle towards me. I mean literally, the clergymen had to grab my arm,” he smiles proudly.

“Give it to them now then May,” Rand says.

May looks at her friends and runs to the other room. “As my friends, I decided I needed to get you a wedding gift, but I didn’t know what you needed. I hope this is enough,” she says handing them a box.

Miley speaks first, “May, this is totally unnecessary. Wait, what could be in this, it weighs next to nothing,” she looks at Eric who grabs the box from Miley.

“I have no patience,” he laughs and opens the top of the box and begins to tear up. Slowly he pulls out the best gift May could have given them.

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There, in his hands, sits a beautiful brown bear wearing a miniature duplicate of Miley’s wedding dress, veil and all. Every detail, down to the handsewn lace.

Miley begins to cry, she hugs May and can’t let go. Hue slips the bear out of Miley’s hands and hands it over to Eric. Eric stands a moment and hugs the bear. “Wow May, simply...Wow,” he shakes his head a moment and says, “come on, if we don’t leave now, the museum will close before we can get there.”

May looks over Miley’s shoulder with a questioning look to Eric. “What? You don’t think I pay attention? We’ve visited the dress three times a week since we’ve been back, but now we won’t have to. Although it does give us a chance to go out for dinner nearby. There is a great burger place there, Hue,” he turns to his friends and smiles. Eric finds himself very filled with emotion. For May to create this bear for them feels overwhelming. The dress alone was a gift from her heart, this is so much more.

Everyone piles into Hue’s car and they head over to his cousin’s museum. Rand sits in the front bench seat with Hue and May. Hue gives him a tour of everything they are seeing on the way to the museum, things that have changed since he left years ago. He is very proud of this city and loves being

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here. “Ok, here we are, the first fashion museum ever opened in the state,” he says proudly.

Everyone gets out, but Hue pulls May’s hand back for a second. He quickly gives her a kiss and smiles. “You are so beautiful. I don’t think you understand what that really means to Miley. I’ll explain later. I love you May, I honestly do,” he holds her eyes with his then they both turn and step out of the car.

In the museum Rand is even more overwhelmed to see the dress in person. “May, I don’t care what our older sister says, you are the one to beat. Sure, I’ve been able to participate in some amazing theater, national tours and such. Semi-famous but, you!! You May, make dreams come true forever, I only get to effect people for a couple hours of their life. I don’t make the memories you make. I’m so proud of you baby girl,” he turns to hold on to his sister again.

“So, I spoke to our brother and everyone wants to be here for your birthday this weekend. Hue do you have any plans yet? Because we’d all like to be a part of anything you have planned,” he looks May in the eye, “All of us, my wife is coming then too.”

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May stares into her brother’s eyes, he is telling the truth. “We could sit around eating fresh cookies and playing board games, that would be enough for me,” she says still staring at her brother, this is what they used to do for birthdays as children.

“That sounds perfect,” Hue says, “but you only have a two-bedroom apartment and I have a much larger place; can we do this at my place? I happen to bake the best chocolate fudge cookies you’ll ever taste,” he smiles at his girl.

Miley pushes Hue forward a moment. Hue steps towards May and pulls out a small box from his pocket. He hands this to May and says, “This is a little something to say I’m not going anywhere. These last couple of months have been my favorite of all time. I hope you accept this, and me in your life,” Hue says sincerely.

May takes the box carefully, inside is a gold necklace with a small heart shaped charm. But not a fake heart, an anatomically correct gold heart. She smiles, of course Hue couldn’t give her an ordinary outline of a heart-shaped charm. “Hue, this is the most beautiful thing ever. But I do challenge you to a cookie bake off. I’m pretty sure Rand’s caramel cookies can put your fudge ones to shame,” she

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pauses, “here, help me put this on,” she turns around and hands him the necklace.

As Hue puts the necklace on May, he kisses her neck and whispers, “This is not a proposal. That will come later. This is just proof of my love.”

With no regard as to where they are, May turns around quickly and puts her arms around Hue’s neck and kisses him square on the lips. The two of them hold on tightly to each other. The friends with them, are cheering.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Hue and Miley are standing together now, as they said they would. Today is Miley’s turn to be the maid of honor for Hue. The past six months have been amazing. They not only became even closer with May and Rand, but Rand and his wife have moved to their neighborhood and are now living in Miley’s old building, With Rand staring in a production that is to start on the first of the year. Eric’s cousin has helped them make the connections necessary to get them settled in faster. A whole new group of friends have become like family.

May’s other brother has come in for the day and has become much more involved in her life. May and Hue have visited him as well.

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“You ready Hue?” Miley asks adjusting his tie.

“I feel it would be proper to have my father in the room right now but it feels better to have you. We did ok Miley, you know? You, me, our friends. We did really well. Even if we aren’t financially successful, we all have made it to adulthood with our heads held high. None of us have gotten in as much trouble as some of our classmates. How did we manage that?” he asks.

“You said the answer yourself. We always had each other. We kept each other out of trouble, kept our heads level. Now, look at us. We’ve watched a few weddings, a couple of kids born to our friends. Yes, we did good Hue, we did damn good,” she says.

“Have you seen May’s dress? Am I going to be able to handle what I see?” he asks.

“Hue, any man standing under the canopy about to get married is effected by their first look at their bride. If they aren’t, they shouldn’t be getting married. She made a dress that will make her shine, as she did for me. That is the magic of May, she couldn’t wear my dress nor could I have worn hers. Her designs are that specific when it comes to wedding gowns. She is perfect for you Hue. She has

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breathed a new kind of life into you, and I for one, am loving this part of you,” she smiles at him holding his hand.

“Ok, let’s head out. I can’t wait to see her,” Hue smiles.

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