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about 1200 words

The Red Box

By Angel Turner

Julie nervously smoothed the minor wrinkles of her red evening gown. She laughed amongst Ben's family and waited the special announcement he had to desperately tell everyone.

"Everyone, can I have your attention please," said Ben.

"O my gosh," said Julie nervously.

Ben flashed a quirky smile at Julie and nodded.

"I wanted to have all of you here tonight because I have been given the opportunity to do something amazing," said Ben.

Ben squeezed Julie's hand under the table and she quickly wiped her eyes. She began to lean forward waiting for her big moment, but it never came. Ben looked around the 10-seater table and leaped out his seat.

"You guys are looking at the new district director for Benz Auto Group," he yelled.

His stifled scream was overshadowed by the visible disappointment on Julie's face. Frustrated, she slapped the table with her left hand and thumped it loudly. Ben's excitement diminished Julie's mild physical outburst.

"I am going to make \$150,000 a year," said Ben. "That's like three times what I make now."

"Wait, so, this wasn't an engagement party?" said Julie, in a low tone.

Confused by her comment, Ben reached his hand out to touch Julie. Thoroughly embarrassed, she jumped up from the table and stormed out of the room.

In the hallway Julie paced back and forth while waiting for her Uber.

"How could he?" she whispered to herself. Her cheeks beamed red from the humiliation of thinking today, she would gain an extravagant piece of jewelry – an engagement ring.

"Julie, wait up," said Ben. "I didn't mean to embarrass you, but what made you think I wanted to propose to you? I mean, we've only dated for a year now."

Her pacing only grew faster as his words pierced her ears.

"Only dated?" yelled Julie. "I've given you my whole life. I gave you my heart and soul. And you bring me here, tonight, to meet your parents, and that email you sent me."

Ben reached out to grab Julie's shoulder but she shook him off. "Just forget it," she said. "I don't have time for this."

Julie ran outside to her awaiting Uber. Ben just stood there confused by what just happened. *I'll just call her in the morning*, Ben thought. *That'll give her time to get herself together.*

In the Uber, Julie searched through her emails, looking for the proof. "A ha!" she yelled from the back seat. "Sorry, I was just ..."

"It's no problem," the Uber driver said, looking at Julie through the rearview mirror. Julie read the email without blinking. *I can't wait until Friday. This will be a day you will forever remember. I love you so much, I always have and I always will, love B. P.S. Look out for the red box, (smiley face.)*

Julie slammed her phone on the seat next to her and sat in silence until the Uber pulled up to her house. "Thank you," she said to the driver. She quickly grabbed her phone and hopped out the car.

Back in her front yard, her focus started to shift off from the nights' chain of events to her house check routine. She slowly walked up the five steps leading to her door. She tried not to replay the last two hours in her head. Instead, she looked around her yard as she always did.

Even though it had been five years since the last time her ex-boyfriend assaulted her, she knew the amount of crazy he possessed would one day bring them back together. As she looked around her yard one final time something below her caught her eye. A huge smile beamed across Julie's face.

Ben you're going to get it. You freaking liar.

Julie took a picture of the red box and sent it Ben. She also forwarded him the email he supposedly didn't send her. In the subject line she wrote: YES.

She bent down to pick up the red box and went into the house.

Ring, Ring.

“Hey baby. As you can see I got it,” Julie said, answering phone. “I haven’t opened it yet though.”

“Julie, I didn’t send that that email. Ben said. You know my email and that isn’t it.”

She quickly looked at the email she just sent to Ben and noticed that it was off by one letter. Someone purposely tried to make her think it was Ben when in fact it was not. It was in that instant, 4 minutes and 38 seconds past the moment she got into the house to be exact, she KNEW.

Her eyes widened at the sound of the doorbell. As she turned around, a glimpse of him peeked through the glass sliver. She didn’t want to but she knew she had to. She fearfully walked toward the door. Her hand trembled as she turned the knob. The day she always knew would come was finally here.

“Hello, Julie. I hope you liked what was in the red box,” said Brad.

Her nightmare from hell had finally found her. She prayed that this time she would be as lucky as before.

Brad snatched the phone from out her hand and pressed the red button to end her call with Ben.

“You look so beautiful dear,” said Brad. And that red dress matches the box almost perfectly. You always like to coordinate things.”

Julie started walking backwards but Brad grabbed her by the throat, halting her instantly.

“Brad,” Julie managed to gasp.

He tightened his grip to hush her up.

“Shh. It’s my time to talk. I have waited more than five years for this moment. You left me and thought the police could keep me from getting to you. You thought this Brad guy could replace me. Well I’m here. And this time, you’re not leaving me.

Julie reached out her hand to touch Brad’s face. He always loved it when she caressed his face. He loosened his grip enough for Julie to speak.

“I love you,” said Julie. “I just didn’t know what to do.”

Brad stepped back from Julie made a run for it. She ran outside screaming for help. Brad was right behind her.

“Julie get back here,” he yelled.

She kept running. She could feel his breath on her as she tried to run faster. *Don’t look back. Just run a little bit further.* She ran to her mailbox and kicked over the concrete flower pot. There was a gun waiting for her. She knew this moment would come but always thought she would never make it this far. She grabbed the gun and spun around to where Brad stopped in his tracks. She didn’t speak. She didn’t listen. She didn’t leave any room for a mistake to happen. She fired all six shots. Five of the six hit him. All of her practicing paid off. He fell to the ground. She stood there and waited for his final breaths.

The night turned out much different than she imagined. She didn’t have a fiancé. She wasn’t pinning wedding ideas to Pinterest. But one thing she did have was her freedom. Freedom from her ex and freedom to live life without wondering when her last day would be.

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