

YourEssence

Chapter 2 - Quarreling Lovers



Mary Simms sat at her desk, completing the last of several pages of documents. With a weary sigh, she closed the folder from her most recent pair of patients. When Mary chose to utilize her degree in Psychology to forge a career as a marriage counselor, she had looked forward to helping people navigate life as a couple. She truly believed she was good in her role. Mary just wished there was less paperwork involved with the job. Obtaining pre-authorizations (PA) to begin therapy, filing out progress notes, and the endless billing. A quarter of her work responsibilities involved working with health insurance providers.

She opened the file for the next appointment—another young couple having issues. Mary immediately checked to see if the PA was approved. After all, it was only fair that she be appropriately reimbursed for her time. She noted that not only had it been approved, but the provider was one she didn't mind dealing with. Her

eyes scanned the forms the couple had filled out. The insurance was under the husband, David Martin. Her guess that his employer must provide better benefits was confirmed when she checked that the wife, Diana Martin, was a college professor having recently completed her doctorate.

Mary shook her head sadly. Diana fulfilled such a vital role in society and was treated a little better than someone cooking French fries at a fast food restaurant. She got up from her desk and went to welcome the Martins. Mary was confident she could get to the root of their problems and tally another successful save of a marriage.

She asked the couple to join her in the office. Not surprisingly, they sat on the leather couch as far from one another as possible. Mary's experienced eye saw the classic body language from David. He was reluctant to be here. She grabbed a small notebook and sat opposite them. Mary looked at Diana and bade her to describe a little about herself. As usual, the young woman was more open and willing to elaborate on their issues. As Diana talked, Mary scribbled down some brief notes.

Diana:

24 years old.

College Professor, young for such a prestigious position.

Three siblings. All younger. Parents / married. Live an hour away.

Long, straight black hair.

Some Latino heritage?

More outgoing personality.

She appears physically fit but claims she doesn't like to work out.

Places importance on appearance. Organized.

Many issues. Loss of passion in love life. Lack of respect and understanding of her.

Mary found the comment about the lack of understanding interesting. David looked to be a typical Caucasian male. The surname suggested English ancestry. Mary would have thought he would be interested in learning more about his wife owing to their different cultural backgrounds.

Getting David to open up was more difficult. She had to ask more direct questions.

David:

24 years old.

Engineer.

1 Sibling / younger. Parents / divorced. Live in the city.

Short brown hair.

Well groomed. Is it necessary for his job as a manager at a manufacturing facility?

Reserved personality. Unrelated to the counseling session.

Physically fit. He claims he works out every day.
He doesn't understand why Diana is mad at him. He hates being here.

Every couple Mary had ever worked with was unique, but David and Diana shared many similarities. She looked at David.

"So you contend you're happy with your love life?" she asked pointedly.

He squirmed with the directness of the question.

"Well, yeah. We make love a couple of times a week," he said sheepishly.

On the other end of the couch, Diana glared at him with both arms folded across her chest. Mary didn't need a college degree to tell Diana was of a different mind on this subject.

"You may call it love, but I feel like I'm a piece of meat," she spat out venomously.

Mary furiously scribbled notes as the two started bickering. At least they were talking now.

After the session, David and Diana returned to the one-bedroom apartment they rented. The atmosphere in their car could be aptly described as chilly, and the air conditioning wasn't even on. He gripped the steering while wondering why he had even agreed to see a counselor as Diana wanted—the last hour only seemed to open old wounds instead of helping their marriage.

As soon as they arrived home, Diana headed to the bedroom and slammed the door shut. David rubbed his back in anticipation of another uncomfortable night asleep on the couch. He dearly loved Diana but felt completely lost for what to do. His engineering background gave him the skills to fix many things but no insight into how to repair his marriage.

He turned the TV on but barely watched whatever was on the sports channel. His stomach's loud growling finally alerted him that he hadn't eaten in hours.

'A bowl of cereal it is. Good old bachelor chow,' he thought sadly.

He didn't even bother to sit down while eating. He stared mindlessly at the kitchen cabinets, munching on the wheat flakes, when Diana appeared in the entry to the kitchen. Her demeanor had softened since they arrived home.

"Dinner of Champions, I see," she joked.

David felt his spirits lift. At least she wasn't mad at him at for the moment. He recalled her complaint at the counseling session regarding his lack of help at home.

"Can I interest you in tonight's special?"

A trace of a smile creased her lips, "And what would that be?"

"Wheat flakes au lait," he deadpanned.

Diana stifled a laugh. She didn't want him to think he could joke his way out of their problems. Still, there was an impish quality in him that she loved. Diana wrapped her arms around his waist and hugged him.

"You don't have to sleep on the couch. But I'm exhausted," she alerted him. "The kids at school were an extra handful today."

He nodded solemnly. There would be no post-argument sex tonight.

As Diana prepared for bed, David went to brush his teeth. People always said she was such a good influence on him. Personal hygiene was undoubtedly one of those aspects. Once they got decent jobs after college, Diana insisted they obtain prescriptions for the new YourEssence pills. He had been skeptical about the need and the co-pay costs. Both were still working off college debt and saving to buy a home. He also wondered why 20-something adults had any need for these pills.

However, their doctor pointed out that the human body generates 100 million new cells daily by cell division. Even if the process was 99.999% accurate, that still left the possibility that 10,000 cells might develop the first genetic steps toward becoming cancerous. The company that marketed YourEssence heavily promoted its pill's ability to correct any errors that might develop over time.

With his focus divided between his teeth and his marriage, he absentmindedly reached into the cabinet to grab his pill bottle. He barely glanced at it to confirm who its contents were intended for. Seeing "Martin, D.." was enough information, so he popped the cap off and swallowed one pill. He thrust the bottle back on the shelf in what he thought was the proper place.

He made two mistakes. The first was the bottle he opened for "Martin, Diana." The second was when he went to place it on the right side of the cabinet, and he

inadvertently moved his prescription to the left.

Their apartment bathroom was only large enough for one person at a time. After David returned to the bedroom, Diana took her turn. Today's events had left her both physically and mentally exhausted, so she might be forgiven for not scrutinizing the label of her YourEssence bottle closely. Diana had kept the bathroom tidy, and her bottle was in the spot it had always been in. Thus, she dutifully swallowed a pill and brushed her teeth.

The two quickly fell asleep with Diana nestled in David's arms.

As the hours crept by, their bodies began to change.

(The story idea and original description by Kirafair are used here with permission. Revisions and continued story by JennyAmara)