

THE RETURN OF MELISSA

by

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OVER BLACK

A man mutters above the sounds of SCREECHING AND THUMPING.

NATHAN (V.O.)

The light of God surrounds us.  
The love of God enfolds us.  
The power of God protects us.  
The presence of God watches over  
us.  
Wherever we are, God is, and where  
God is, all is well.

FADE IN:

INT. STORAGE ROOM - NIGHT

It's dark. A pile of chairs barricades the door. The SCREECHING comes from the other side. THUMPING against the door. Something, or someone, is desperate to get in.

NATHAN, early 30s, eyes shut, sweats as he sits with the back to the barricade and feverishly reads from a book of prayers.

The door shakes with each THUMP.

NATHAN

As a Father, guard and protect me  
from all evil.

THUMP!

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Grant me protection. Grant, O Lord,  
Thy protection. And in protection,  
strength, and in strength,  
understanding.

THUMP.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

And in understanding, knowledge.  
And in knowledge, the knowledge of  
justice. And in the knowledge of  
justice, the love of it.

THUMP... Silence.

Nathan opens his eyes. He listens. The room is still. He takes a deep breath and closes his eyes.

EXT. COLORADO HIGHWAY - DAY

The sun shines brightly as a lone used car winds its way down the highway.

INT. NATHAN'S CAR - DAY

A bouquet of pink roses and a case of fancy champagne in the passenger seat as Nathan drives wearing a blue suit and big smile.

He presses the "CALL" button on the car's steering wheel.

NATHAN

Melissa.

The phone RINGS.

Then:

MELISSA (V.O.)

Where are you?

NATHAN

On the way home. It was a queue.

INT. NATHAN'S HOME, BATHROOM - DAY

MELISSA, a beautiful brunette in her 30's, in a long red dress, talks with Nathan on speakerphone as she applies lipstick.

MELISSA

Have you got it?

NATHAN

(giving a glance at  
champagne)

Yeap! And it was expensive!

MELISSA

You deserve a kiss.

NATHAN

Only a kiss?

MELISSA

Drive fast, baby. Guests are coming.

NATHAN

In a couple of minutes!

She ends the call.

EXT. NATHAN'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

The Nathan's car approaches Exit 235. A turn signal.

EXT. NATHAN'S HOME - LATER

Nathan's car pulls up to a beautiful home surrounded by a forest. He gathers the roses and champagne and heads toward a "WELCOME TO M&N ANNIVERSARY" banner hanging over the front door.

INT. NATHAN'S HOME, LIVING ROOM - LATER

Colorful balloons, candles and party streamers decorate the room. There is a piano in the corner.

A banner reading "NATHAN + MELISSA = 10 YEARS OF LOVE" hangs on the wall.

Melissa sits by the window, reading a book. A gold engraving on it reads "PRAYERS."

Nathan enters carrying the roses and champagne. He spots Melissa and stops in awe.

NATHAN

Wow!

Melissa closes her book and smiles as he sets the bottle on the table next to the finger food and wine, then approaches her with the roses, which he hands to her.

MELISSA

They're beautiful.

NATHAN

Beautiful flowers for my gorgeous queen.

Nathan gently hugs Melissa and inhales her hair's smell as she smiles and enjoys the roses.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

(whispering in her ear)

There's more...

He reaches in his jacket pocket, pulls out a small velvet box and hands it to Melissa.

NATHAN (CONT'D)  
For you, Mel.

MELISSA  
What is it?

Nathan grins as he takes the roses and sets them on the table.

Melissa opens the box. Inside is a golden medallion in the shape of a heart, adorned with diamonds on one side and rubies on the other.

MELISSA (CONT'D)  
Wow!

NATHAN  
Want to try it on?

She nods, and he helps her put it on. Melissa admires her reflection in a big mirror as Nathan stands behind her, smiling.

MELISSA  
It's lovely! Thank you, Nat!

NATHAN  
Happy anniversary, darling!

Melissa gives him a light kiss on the lips. Then, they kiss deeper and hold each other in a long embrace.

MELISSA  
(whispering)  
Happy Anniversary.

NATHAN  
Happy Anniversary.

INT. NATHAN'S HOME, LIVING ROOM - LATER

ROMANTIC MUSIC plays as well-dressed guests gather around a buffet table.

Nathan speaks with Melissa's suntanned brother JACK in his mid-30's.

JACK  
Are you renewing your vows tonight?

NATHAN  
We decided not to.

JACK

Nat...

NATHAN

We don't need neither God nor a priest to validate our marriage.

A Cell Phone RINGS in Nathan's pocket.

PHONE (V.O.)

Mom!

NATHAN

Sorry, Jack.

JACK

Talk to you later.

Nathan nods and steps aside.

NATHAN (O.S.)

Hi mom!

TERESA (V.O.)

My best wishes to you and Melissa, son!

NATHAN

Thanks! How John's doing?

TERESA

In the bed.

(beat)

Still weak.

Nathan notices that Melissa watches at him. He mouths the word "mom" to her. She smiles.

TERESA (CONT'D)

Are guests already in?

NATHAN

Yep.

TERESA

Good. Have a nice party, son.

NATHAN

Thanks, we are going to miss you.  
And a good recovery for John!

Nathan ends the call and looks at his cell with a gentle smile.

MOMENTS LATER

A childhood friend of Melissa MONICA, 33, a plump, red-haired woman with false eyelashes and an expensive necklace, chats with Melissa as she fills up her plate.

MONICA

So, you have been married to Nat for 10 years already?

MELISSA

Well, actually today we celebrate 10 years from the day when we first met.

MONICA

Oh, really? Interesting.

MELISSA

(smiling)  
Yep, Nathan's idea.

MONICA

(screwing up eyes)  
He is romantic!  
(beat)  
Any kids?

MELISSA

No.  
(beat)  
Not yet.

MONICA

What you are waiting for?

MELISSA

Well...  
(beat)  
We are waiting for Nat's big break.

MONICA

Big break? Hmm...

MELISSA

And you?

MONICA

Well, no big breaks, three kids, two marriages and divorced again.

MELISSA

Three kids? Amazing!

MONICA  
 (watching at Nathan)  
 He has PhD, doesn't he?

Melissa nods.

MONICA (CONT'D)  
 Cool! Good money?

Melissa frowns.

MARK, 40s, with large glasses, raises his glass.

His date, GERA, 25, also raises her glass.

MARK  
 Happy Anniversary!

GERA  
 Happy Anniversary, Mel and Nat!

ALL GUESTS  
 Happy Anniversary!

Everyone drinks their champagne.

MELISSA  
 Nathan, this is for you.

She nods to a guest, who switches off the recorded music as she glides over to a beautiful piano and sits down.

MELISSA (CONT'D)  
 (to Nathan)  
 I wrote it just for you.  
 It's called "My Love Forever  
 Yours."

Nathan's eyes fill with tears as he listens to the piano piece. At the end of the song, everyone APPLAUDS, including Nathan, who approaches Melissa as she stands to take a bow, then kisses her.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Melissa chats with Gera, who admires the big painting on the wall of two naked women and lighted candle on it.

GERA  
 White and black.

MELISSA  
 You guessed the title.

GERA  
You painted this?

Melissa nods.

MELISSA  
It's about dual nature of a human  
and the light is a thrashing soul.

Gera looks at her, intrigued.

GERA  
Are you an artist?

MELISSA  
I am a teacher, but an artist by my  
heart.

Gera nods and sips from her glass.

GERA  
And what Nathan is doing?

MELISSA  
Nathan?  
(beat)  
Some experiments in his lab.

GERA  
Experiments?

MELISSA  
Yep.

INT. HALL - CONTINUOUS

Nathan and Mark with glasses filled with brandy descend stairs leading to the door with a sign: NO ENTRY FOR VISITORS!

INT. LAB - MOMENTS LATER

The lab is occupied by mice cages, plots with plants and cereals surrounded by the high-tech equipment.

They walk around.

MARK  
I think you're the only guy on the  
planet that has this type of  
basement.

NATHAN  
There are two basements here, in fact.

MARK  
Two?

NATHAN  
That's right. It was part of the original design.

He indicates the dimple on the floor. Mark tries the door. It's stuck.

NATHAN (CONT'D)  
(waved his hand)  
We don't go down, not at this time.

Mark approaches the operational table. He touches a massive device above it.

MARK  
(frowning)  
Expensive?

NATHAN  
Good value for the price.

MARK  
So, what are you working on these days?

NATHAN  
On a research.

MARK  
Huh! Seriously?

Nathan sighs and puts away his drink.

NATHAN  
What?

MARK  
With your brains, you could write a few books in your field and gain a fancy Professor label. You could enjoy an endless cash flow for the rest of your life.

NATHAN  
I have some money.

MARK  
But, no stability.

NATHAN  
Well, who knows what tomorrow will bring?

MARK  
That's true. But still, why do you do this?

NATHAN  
What? My research?

MARK  
Yes, research, maintaining your lab, taking risks, all that.

NATHAN  
Well...

Nathan sighs and sips his drink.

NATHAN (CONT'D)  
When I was in high school, I went to Africa. It was a harvest failure in that year, and people without food were just... dying. It was awful.

MARK  
(sipping from his glass)  
Yeah, life is tough sometimes.

NATHAN  
But I want to change that.  
(beat)  
I want to improve the survival plants and animals, for the good of people.

MARK  
Sounds cool.  
(beat)  
I admire idealists.

Mark raises his glass.

MARK (CONT'D)  
For your luck then!

NATHAN  
Thanks, Mark. For success!