

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!

THUMP!

He raises his voice.

NATHAN (V.O.)
The love of God enfolds us!

THUMP!

The man screams.

NATHAN (V.O.)
The power of God protects us!

FADE IN:

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.

The smile disappears from his face when he glances at the church, which he passes by.

FLASHBACK - INT. CONFESSION BOOTH - DAY (25 YEARS EARLIER)

A crucifix hangs over the grille, separating YOUNG NATHAN, 7, combed hair, from the CONFESSION PRIEST (60's). Nathan makes the sign of the Cross.

NATHAN
Bless me, Father, for I have
sinned. This is my first
confession.

The Priest smiles knowingly.

CONFESSIOIN PRIEST
 Congratulations, son. Now, confess
 the mortal sins you committed.

NATHAN
 I haven't committed any, Father.

The Priest clears his throat.

CONFESSIOIN PRIEST
 Confess all the venial sins and ask
 for forgiveness.

NATHAN
 I am guiltless, Father.

The Priest raises his voice.

CONFESSIOIN PRIEST
 It is my duty to pass a sentence
 upon your guilt or innocence. Your
 duty is to tell me the truth
 regarding your sins.

Nathan is silent.

CONFESSIOIN PRIEST (CONT'D)
 (in a softer voice)
 All people sin, my son. And I can
 help you release them.

NATHAN
 (in a lower voice)
 I...
 (beat)
 I have been grieving over the loss
 of my father.

CONFESSIOIN PRIEST
 What happened to him?

NATHAN
 (whispering)
 He... became ill...
 (beat)
 And died...

CONFESSIOIN PRIEST
 (in a loud voice)
 I can't hear you!
 (beat)
 Died?

Nathan is silent.

CONFESSION PRIEST (CONT'D)
 (in a strict voice)
 That is a will of God!
 (beat)
 Do you understand that?

With tears in his eyes, Nathan gets up and bolts.

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 the front door with a sign "WELCOME".

INT. NATHAN'S HOME, LIVING ROOM - LATER

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

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, a beautiful brunette (34), a long red dress, and stops in awe.

She senses that she isn't alone and looks up. She smiles.

 MELISSA
 (exclaims)
 Nathan!

 NATHAN
 (smiling)
 That's me!

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
 My favorite...

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

Nathan whispers in her ear.

 NATHAN
 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 diamond grit on one side and small rubies on the other.

MELISSA (CONT'D)
Oh, it's beautiful!

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 watches from over her shoulder.

MELISSA
It's lovely! Thank you, Nate!

Melissa gives him a light kiss on the lips.

NATHAN
Happy anniversary, darling!

They kiss deeper and hold each other in a long embrace.

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 KEITH in his mid 30's.

KEITH
Are you renewing your vows tonight?

NATHAN
We decided not to.

KEITH
Nate...

Nathan stares at the cross pendant at Keith's neck.

NATHAN
 (slowly)
 We don't need either God or a
 priest to validate our marriage.

A Cell Phone RINGS in Nathan's pocket.

PHONE (V.O.)
 Mom!

NATHAN
 Sorry, Keith.

KEITH
 Talk to you later.

Nathan nods and steps aside.

NATHAN (O.S.)
 Hi mom!

TERESA (V.O.)
 Congratulations with anniversary!

NATHAN
 Thanks! How are you?

TERESA
 John is still weak.

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

TERESA (V.O.)
 Are the guests there?

NATHAN
 Yep.

Smiling Melissa walks over to Nathan.

TERESA (V.O.)
 Good. My best wishes to you and
 Mel.

NATHAN
 (to Melissa)
 Best wishes to us.

MELISSA
 (into the phone)
 Thank you!

TERESA (V.O.)
Come to Florida anytime.

MELISSA
Sure, but don't expect me to swim!

TERESA (V.O.)
I won't!

NATHAN
Thanks, mom. We are going to miss
you. And a good recovery for John!

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

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

ROSALIA (33), a plump, red-haired woman, chats with Melissa as she fills up her plate.

ROSALIA
Ten years of married life didn't
spoil you at all. You look even
prettier than at school.

MELISSA
Oh, am I? Actually, we celebrate
10 years from the day when we first
met.

ROSALIA
Oh, really?

MELISSA
Yep, Nathan's idea.

Rosalia screws up her eyes.

ROSALIA
He is romantic!
(beat)
Any kids?

MELISSA
Not yet.

Melissa sighs. Rosalia stares at her.

MELISSA (CONT'D)
We are waiting for Nate's big
break...

ROSALIA
Big break? Hmm...

MELISSA
And you?

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

MELISSA
Three kids? Amazing!

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

His date, GERA, 20's, also raises her glass.

MARK
Happy Anniversary!

GERA
Happy Anniversary, Mel and Nate!

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.

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 a lighted candle on it.

GERA
White and black.

MELISSA
You guessed the title.

GERA
Did you paint 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?

INT. HALL - CONTINUOUS

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

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.

They sit down on the chairs.

MARK

So, what are you working on these days?

NATHAN

On research.

MARK

Huh! Seriously?

Nathan sighs and puts away his drink.

NATHAN

What?

MARK

With your brains, you could easily write a couple of books, gain a fancy Professor label and enjoy an endless cash flow.

NATHAN

I have the money.

MARK

Oh, really? I saw your car.

Nathan frowns.

NATHAN
My father died when I was only
seven...

MARK
Yeah, life is tough sometimes.

NATHAN
But I want to change that.
(beat)
I want to improve the survival of
people and I have my own vision on
how to do it.

MARK
Sounds cool.
(beat)
I admire risk-takers.

NATHAN
Come to the conference tomorrow,
you will know more.

Mark raises his glass.

MARK
For the success of science, Nate!

NATHAN
For science!

They CLINK their glasses.

EXT. NATHAN'S HOME - NIGHT

Melissa and Nathan wave goodbye to the guests, then they turn
to each other.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

There are lighted candles on the shelf behind a king-size
bed. Nathan hugs Melissa as she sips unfinished champagne
from her glass.

NATHAN
Let's me take the glass from you.

MELISSA
Wait!

NATHAN
You have a school tomorrow, baby.

Melissa giggles.

MELISSA

Tomorrow will be tomorrow. I have a party tonight!

NATHAN

You can't be drunk in front of your children, Mel.

Melissa puts her glass on the shelf as Nathan draws her closer to him and inhales her smell.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

You are my champagne, Mel.

Melissa presses her body against Nathan's as he kisses her and takes her to bed.

They passionately make love.

LATER One by one, Nathan extinguishes the candles on the shelf. There are some framed photographs behind the candles:

Wedding photo of Nathan and Melissa;

Nathan, Melissa and Keith with rucksacks;

Young Nathan with his Mom.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Nathan tosses and turns in the bed.

FLASHBACK - INT. CATHOLIC CHURCH - DAY(25 YEARS EARLIER)

Light filters into the church through large stained-glass windows. A crucified Jesus hangs on the wall, next to the Virgin Mary. There is a confessional booth to the right.

Close to the booth is a young Nathan and Nathan's mother TERESA, 42.

Teresa carefully adjusts Nathan's jacket and collar.

TERESA

It's OK, Nathan. The first confession is always the hardest.

She kisses him and turns him toward the confessional. Nathan hesitates.

NATHAN
Mom, why did God take my dad from
me?

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Nathan wakes with a start. Melissa is still asleep, her book of Prayers on her bedside table.

Nathan rubs his face, gets out of bed, looks at Melissa's book, frowns in disgust and picks it up by two fingers.

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Nathan opens the trash can. He holds the book of Prayers above it, nearly throws it out... then changes his mind. He sets it down on the bathroom counter and proceeds to brush his teeth.

INT. HALL - LATER

Nathan, holding a bag of mouse food, comes across screwing up eyes from the light Melissa.

NATHAN
Good morning!

MELISSA
Morning.
(beat)
Going to the lab?

NATHAN
Where else?

He heads downstairs.

INT. NATHAN'S LAB - LATER

Nathan enters the lab opening the food's bag.

NATHAN
Morning, everyone!

He approaches the mice's aviary. The massive water bowl in the mice's cage has fallen.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Oh, no!

Nathan lifts the bowl off the ground revealing a white mouse caught underneath it.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Damn!

Nathan picks up the mouse by the tail. The mouse doesn't move. Nathan palps the mouse's body, puts it on the lab table and takes a small device off the hook.

Attached the electrodes to the mouse's body he connects a separate wire to the computer. Within seconds, the mouse flatlines at the computer screen.

Nathan removes the pins from the mouse's body. He sighs and holding its tail heads over to the biowaste box.

MOMENTS LATER

Nathan stops. He looks at the mouse. An inquisitive look appears on his face.

Then: The dead mouse lies into a vessel on the lab table with several wires to its body. Nathan clicks on the AUTOMATIC REGENERATIVE RADIATION button at the computer's screen.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Melissa, wearing an apron, prepares food as Nathan enters.

NATHAN

Smells good!

He kisses Melissa on the neck and looks into her face.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Hangover?

MELISSA

(gloomily)

Breakfast is ready.

She switches off the stove and goes to the dining table as Nathan puts several bratwursts and mustard on his plate and sits in front of Melissa.

NATHAN

I'm as hungry as a thousand wolves.

Melissa languidly picks a green salad at her plate as Nathan cuts sausages.

MELISSA

I found my book of prayers in the bathroom. How did it get to there?

NATHAN

Maybe God moved it there.

She lays her fork aside.

MELISSA

Nathan...

Nathan eats his food without looking at her.

MELISSA (CONT'D)

I want kids.

Nathan slowly chews a sausage and lifts eyes at Melissa.

NATHAN

We will, Mel.

(beat)

I promise.

MELISSA

When? I've been supporting you all this time. When is it my turn?

NATHAN

Mel...

MELISSA

This place is too quiet! It's like a cemetery!

NATHAN

Mel, the conference is going to be a real game changer. My investor...

(beat)

I know that I can convince him to invest.

MELISSA

Invest in what?

(beat)

We lost my parents' financial support because you cancel our wedding at the church.

Nathan stops eating and moves his plate away. He rubs his face by his hand.

NATHAN

What you would like me to do, Mel?

MELISSA

Everything is a giving by God!
(beat)
Your success as well! Let Him into
your heart!

NATHAN

Don't hold your breath, Mel!

Melissa looks at him, disappointed as he leaves the kitchen.

INT. NATHAN'S LAB - LATER

Nathan stands in front of the operating table. He watches the white mouse, previously dead, now released from the wires and moving around inside his container.

FLASHBACK - INT. CHILDHOOD HOME - DAY

There is a big bed in the small and humble room. NATHAN'S FARTHER with yellowish-waxy face lies in it as a PRIEST in a chilling voice reads last rites to him.

PRIEST

From dust you came, and to dust you
shall return!

INT. NATHAN'S LAB - LATER

Nathan rushes over to his computer and excitedly types away:

Day and time of death: between 4PM 11/24 and 10AM 11/25. Day
and time of regeneration: 11/25 between 10AM and 11:07AM.

Nathan takes some black ink off a shelf and dabs a bit onto
the mouse back.

NATHAN

You will be Rege.

Nathan takes some grains out of the food box. He gives it to Rege, that smells the food, but doesn't touch it.

Nathan glances at the clock. His eyes widen.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Damn!

He gets up and rushes out.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - LATER

Nathan, dressed in a suit and an elegant coat, puts a laptop bag and folder into the back seat of his car. Melissa, in a winter jacket, gives Nathan a packed lunch.

MELISSA

Drive safe.

Nathan nods.

NATHAN

Mel, don't be mad at me.

He steps closer, hugs her and kisses in her forehead.

MELISSA

Good luck with the investors!

She kisses him on the cheek, then watches him get in the car and drive away.

EXT. COLORADO HIGHWAY - DAY

Nathan's car winds through the peaceful countryside.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Melissa puts the dishes in the dishwasher. Something or someone flashes around her feet.

INT. NATHAN'S CAR - LATER

Nathan eats the sandwich and sips his coffee driving down the road.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Melissa bends down to close the dishwasher as a white mouse with a black mark on his back grins to her from the inside. Melissa SCREAMS.

EXT. COLORADO SPRING - DAY

Dark, menacing clouds roll in. A blistering wind rips through the trees.

INT. NATHAN'S CAR - DAY

Nathan switches on a radio.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
 There's a severe thunderstorm
 warning in effect until midnight...

Sound of INTERFERENCE and NOISE.

RADIO ANNOUNCER
 Large hail and damaging winds for
 the following counties...

Nathan turns off the radio. He puts away his half-eaten sandwich and picks up his phone.

NATHAN
 (speaking into it)
 Call Melissa.

There is no answer. His phone screen reads: NO NETWORK COVERAGE and he keeps driving.

EXT. CONFERENCE CENTER PARKING LOT - DAY

Nathan gets out of his car and makes his way across the parking lot as JEFFREY FOSTER, a middle-aged, balding man, emerges from his car across from Nathan. Nathan spots him and waves.

NATHAN
 Jeff!

Jeffrey waves back.

JEFFREY
 Nathan!

They meet up and shake hands.

NATHAN
 Thanks for coming!

JEFFREY
 No problem.

NATHAN
 So, did you receive the Report?

JEFFREY
 Yes, and I read it last night.

NATHAN

And?

JEFFREY

Let's get settled first.

INT. CONFERENCE HALL - DAY

Jeffrey and Nathan enjoy some snacks with their coffee.

JEFFREY

I have to admit, Nathan, I'm impressed. If your findings are true and you're able to regenerate dying tissue...

NATHAN

We could cure cancer... stop the aging process... Hell, we could live forever!

Nathan spots Mark Brown at the table outside and waves his hand to him. Mark walks over to Nathan's table.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

What's a surprise, Mark!

MARK

No problem.

NATHAN

(to Mark)

This is Jeffrey Foster, my investor.

MARK

Nice to met you, Jeffrey.

NATHAN

Jeffrey, this is Mark Brown, my ex-colleague from university.

JEFFREY

Nice to meet you, Mark.

A BELL sounds, an invitation for the guests to take their seats in the hall. Nathan finishes his coffee and smiles.

NATHAN

It's show time.

INT. LECTURE'S HALL - LATER

Nathan is on the scene with the tiny microphone close to his mouth.

NATHAN

As a matter of fact, after the radiation procedure, the organism will not only survive, but be stronger than it was before.

EXT. NATHAN'S HOME - LATER

A harsh wind blasts against Melissa as she exits the house. She pulls her coat around her and rushes to her car.

INT. LECTURE'S HALL - LATER

PARTICIPANT 1

How hard is it to do this?
Practically speaking.

NATHAN

The mathematical equation itself is pretty complex, but I managed to write a program, which significantly simplified the procedure.

Nathan looks at Jeffrey, who's dazzled by his presentation.

JEFFREY

Interesting. And the reverse? Can you turn a healthy organism into a sick one?

NATHAN

Theoretically, yes. But I haven't tested that yet.

INT. MELISSA'S CAR - DAY

Melissa slams the car door closed behind her. Wind and hail RATTLE on the windows. She turns on the car. Blasts the heat.

INT. LECTURE'S HALL - LATER

Nathan shows his slides and explains studies on the sample of the dead mouse, which he brought back to life.