

THE RETURN OF MELISSA

Feature Film Screenplay

Written 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, 32 years of age, eyes shut, sweats as he sits on the floor and feverishly reads from a book of prayers.

As the door shakes with each THUMP, Nathan reads the prayers louder and louder.

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!

THUMP!

NATHAN (CONT'D)

And in strength, understanding!

THUMP!

NATHAN (CONT'D)

And in understanding, knowledge!
And in knowledge...

THUMP!

Silence.

MOMENTS LATER

Nathan opens his eyes. He listens - the room is still.

He takes a deep breath and closes his eyes.

BACK TO PRESENT:

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 a big smile.

MOMENTS LATER

Nathan's face frowns as his car drives past the church. He sighs and presses the "CALL" button on the car's steering wheel.

NATHAN
Call Melissa.

The phone RINGS.

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 (34) in a long red dress, talks with Nathan on speakerphone applying lipstick.

MELISSA
Have you got it?

INTERCUT NATHAN AND MELISSA

NATHAN
(giving a glance at
champagne)
Yeah! And it's expensive!

MELISSA
You deserve a kiss.

NATHAN
Only a kiss?

Melissa giggles.

MELISSA
Drive fast, Nat. Guests are
coming...

NATHAN
Almost home!

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 charming house with a forest in
the background.

He gathers the roses and champagne and heads toward a front
door with a "WELCOME TO M&N ANNIVERSARY" banner hanging over.

INT. NATHAN'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

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

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

Melissa sits by the window with 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 food and drinks.

He approaches her with the roses, which he hands to her.

MELISSA

They're beautiful.

She admires the flowers.

NATHAN

Beautiful flowers for my gorgeous queen!

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

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

Wanna 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.

MELISSA

It's lovely! Thank you, Nat!

NATHAN

Happy anniversary, darling!

Melissa gives him a light kiss on the lips.

MELISSA
Happy anniversary, Nat!

Then: 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 with finger food.

Nathan speaks with Melissa's suntanned brother JACK (30s).

JACK
Are you renewing your vows tonight?

NATHAN
We decided not to.

JACK
Nat...

Nathan interrupts him.

NATHAN
We 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, pal.

Nathan nods and steps aside.

NATHAN
Hi mom!

TERESA (V.O.)
My best wishes to you and Melissa, son!

NATHAN
Thanks! How Ryan's doing?

INT. TERESA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

TERESA (67) keeps the old-fashioned cellular phone in her hand.

TERESA
In the bed.
(beat)
Still weak.

INTERCUT NATHAN AND TERESA

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

TERESA (CONT'D)
Are guests already in?

NATHAN (V.O.)
Yep!

TERESA
Good. Have a nice party, son!

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

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

MOMENTS LATER

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 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 are you waiting for?

MELISSA
 Well... We're 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 a Ph.D., doesn't he?

Melissa nods.

MONICA (CONT'D)
 Cool! Good money?

Melissa winces.

MARK BROWN (40), with large glasses, raises his glass. His
 date, green-haired 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 Jack, who switches off the music device as she glides over to a beautiful piano and sits down.

MELISSA (CONT'D)

(to Nathan)

I composed it just for you, Nat.
It's called "My Love Forever
Yours."

Nathan's eyes fill with tears as he listens to the piano piece.

LATER

Everyone APPLAUDS.

Nathan approaches Melissa as she stands to take a bow.

Then: He kisses her.

APPLAUSE.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Melissa chats with Gera, who admires the big painting on the wall of two naked women with covered heads and a lighted candle between them.

GERA

White and black.

MELISSA

Right! You guessed the title.

GERA

Did you paint this?

Melissa nods.

MELISSA

(thoughtfully)

It's about the dual nature of a human, and the light is a rushing soul.

Gera looks at her, intrigued.

GERA
Are you an artist?

MELISSA
Hmm... 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

With glasses with some brandy, Nathan and Mark descend stairs leading to the door with a sign: NO ENTRY!

INT. LAB - MOMENTS LATER

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

They make a tour.

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
Yeah. It was part of the original design.

He points to a dimple on the floor.

Mark passes his glass to Nathan and tries to open the basement door. It's stuck.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

There is nothing there now, but over time the lab can be expanded.

MARK BROWN

Cool!

Mark takes his glass back and approaches the operational table. He touches a massive device above it.

MARK

(frowning)
Expensive?

NATHAN

Good value for the price.

He points to the sofa. They sit down.

MARK

So, what are you working on these days?

NATHAN

On research...

MARK

Research? Seriously?

He grins.

NATHAN

What?

Nathan puts his drink away.

MARK

With your brains, you could easily write a couple of books and gain the fancy professor's title.

NATHAN

And?

MARK

You could enjoy an endless cash flow for the rest of your life.

NATHAN

I have 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
Research, maintaining your lab,
taking risks, all that.

NATHAN
Well...

Nathan sips his drink.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Well, 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 of
plants and animals for the good of
people.

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

They keep silent for a while.

Then: Mark raises his glass.

MARK (CONT'D)
For your luck then!

NATHAN
Thanks. For success!

They CLINK their glasses.

EXT. NATHAN'S HOME - NIGHT

Melissa and Nathan stand outside their home, waving goodbye to the guests.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Two glasses of unfinished champagne and lighted candles on the shelf behind a king-size bed. Nathan and Melissa lie next to each other.

MELISSA
Did you like the party?

NATHAN
Yes.
(beat)
Especially your performance!

Nathan hugs her and inhales her smell.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
It was beautiful, Mel.

Melissa snuggles up to Nathan.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
(kissing her)
I'm so happy to have you, Mel.

Melissa strokes Nathan's hair.

MELISSA
(playfully)
And still, you'll leave me along
for the conference...

NATHAN
I wish you could come with me.

MELISSA
You know, I can't miss my finals.
(beat)
Send me a selfie in that sexy blue
suit.

Melissa giggles and moves her body against Nathan's.

NATHAN
Sexy blue suit, huh?

She nods with a charming smile.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
I hope the investors like the suit
too.

MELISSA
(whispering in his ear)
And the silk red tie, which makes
me hot!

Nathan kisses her, and they passionately make love.

LATER

Melissa and Nathan snuggle up next to each other.

Then: One by one, Nathan extinguishes the candles on the shelf.

There are some framed photographs behind the candles: Nathan, Melissa, and Jack with rucksacks; Young Nathan with his Mom; sun-tanned Nathan and Melissa with a sign across "Regards from Florida".

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Nathan tosses and turns in the bed.

FLASHBACK - INT. CATHOLIC CHURCH - DAY

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, 12, combed hair, and Nathan's mother, TERESA, 47.

Teresa carefully adjusts Nathan's jacket and collar.

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

She kisses him.

INT. CONFESSION BOOTH - MOMENTS LATER

A crucifix hangs over the grille, which separates Nathan from the CONFESSION PRIEST. Nathan makes the sign of the Cross.

NATHAN

Bless me, Father, for I have sinned.

CONFESSION PRIEST

When was your last confession, son?

NATHAN

This is my first one, Father.

The Priest smiles knowingly.

CONFESSION PRIEST

Congratulations, son. Now, confess all the mortal sins you committed.

NATHAN

I haven't done any, Father.

The Confession Priest clears his throat.

CONFESSION PRIEST

Now, my son, confess all the venial sins and ask for forgiveness.

NATHAN

I am guiltless, Father.

CONFESSION PRIEST

My son. It is my duty to pass sentence upon your guilt or innocence.

(beat)

Your duty is to tell me the truth regarding your sins.

Nathan is silent.

CONFESSION PRIEST (CONT'D)

All people sin, my son. And I can help you release yours.

NATHAN

I have been grieving over the loss of my father.

CONFESSION PRIEST

That is the will of God, my son. Do you understand that?

Nathan is silent.

CONFESSOR PRIEST (CONT'D)
Do you have anything else to add?

NATHAN
I hate God for taking my father
from me!

END OF FLASHBACK

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Nathan wakes with a start.

Melissa is still asleep, her book of Prayers lays on her bedside table.

Nathan rubs his face and gets out of bed.

Then: Frowning in disgust, he looks at Melissa's book, and picks it up with two fingers.

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Nathan opens the trash can.

He holds the book of Prayers above it, nearly throws it out...

Then: He 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 sleepy Melissa.

NATHAN
Good morning, my sleeping beauty!

MELISSA
(screwing up eyes from the
light)
Morning.

Nathan kisses her on her cheek.

MELISSA (CONT'D)
Are you making any progress with
your experiments?

NATHAN
(smiling)
In all due time.

MELISSA
(crustily)
I even don't know what you are up
to!

He doesn't tell anything and heads downstairs.

INT. NATHAN'S LAB - LATER

Nathan enters the lab opening the food bag.

NATHAN
Morning, everyone!

He approaches the mice's aviary.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Oh! No!

The massive water bowl had fallen. 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 - no movement.

MOMENTS LATER

Nathan puts the mouse 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.

Then: Nathan removes the pins from the mouse's body. He sighs and, holding its tail, heads over to the bio-waste box.

MOMENTS LATER

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

Then: The dead mouse lies into a small container on the table, several wires to its body. Nathan switches on a small device above the table - green light appears.

Nathan clicks on the AUTOMATIC REGENERATION button on 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.

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 own plate.

NATHAN
I'm as hungry as a thousand wolves!

Melissa languidly picks a green salad at her plate.

MELISSA
I want children, Nathan.

Nathan slowly chews a sausage and lifts his eyes at her.

NATHAN
We will, Mel.

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

NATHAN
Mel... I promise.

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 I can convince him to invest.

MELISSA

Invest in what?

(beat)

You offended my parents by canceling our wedding in the church. We lost their financial support!

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

NATHAN

What would you like me to do, Mel?

MELISSA

Everything is a given by God! Your success as well.

(beat)

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 stares at the white mouse, previously dead, now released from the wires and moving around inside his container.

MOMENTS LATER

Nathan rushes over to his computer and excitedly types away:

Day and time of death: 11/25/2018 between 10 pm and 10:10 am.

Day and time of regeneration: 11/25/2018 between 10:10 am, and 11:07 am.

Nathan takes some black ink off a shelf and dabs a bit onto the mouse's 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!