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Grim

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Grim

By Josh Seiler

“There’s something off about this camera,” said Vinnie.

“Here try posing over here by this bench,” Natalia said.

She looked gorgeous that day. It was their honeymoon and what a beautiful time of year to have it. With icicles hanging from the cliffs and snow falling, Niagara Falls looked almost as breathtaking as Natalia.

“Here, wipe off the lens, my gloves are wet,” he said.

“Well if you weren’t throwing snowballs at me all day then maybe they wouldn’t be!”

Natalia took the camera and tried to wipe it clean with her sleeve. When she handed it back to him she held it tight and pulled him in for a kiss. They both smiled afterwards. It was the kind of smile that contagiously makes you smile too if you’re watching them, or perhaps even a little envious of how happy they are. The lens was still foggy. Vinnie looked concerned.

“Honey, I’m sure the pictures will turn out just fine,” Natalia said.

The shutter snapped again as soon as she finished speaking.

“I wasn’t ready! You’d better not put the up on the mantle at home!”

“Nope, this one’s going in my wallet.”

He grinned. They were dating for a year before they married. “A match made in heaven” is what Vinnie’s mother thought about them. She never said that about his last girlfriend Maria Visketti. They were engaged when she died, and no matter how much he misses her Natalia will always understand. She respects that he lost someone close. It had been over a year after her death before Vinnie started dating again. It seems like enough time to mourn, but he still has some repressed feelings. There have been instances where he would wake in the night and think Natalia was Maria for a second. Natalia is very compassionate and understands. Clearly these experiences haven’t driven her away at all. She still loves Vinnie all the same. It’s not like Maria is a threat, she’s not coming back.

“Have you ever been to that overlook up there?”

“I told you, Natalia. I’ve never been to Niagara Falls before.”

“Come on, follow me.”

She grabbed him by the hand and tugged at him like a dog on a leash pulling their owner. They took more pictures on the lookout.

Then a month later, they're already bickering.

"I told you to find that camera last night and you decided to watch football instead."

"Relax, babe. I'll go get it right now."

He shuffles out of his seat at the breakfast table and murmurs profanities under his breath. Natalia waits impatiently before she parts on her adventure to take pictures of the freshly blooming flowers in Central Park with her girlfriends.

"I never got it developed from our honeymoon," was the first thing he said as he entered the room with the camera in his hands.

"You're kidding me."

"Hey, you didn't get it developed either, now did you?"

"I can probably do it before I go out with the girls; Stacey already said she'd be late."

While Natalia waited at the CVS on 53rd and 10th for the developing process, she contemplated how much they've been through in the past year and how grateful she is to have Vinnie in her life. As she thought of a resolution to the ill-mannered way she'd been treating Vinnie lately the clerk approached her.

"Something was off about this camera, I'm sorry it took so long. Where did you get it anyways? This thing is an antique," said the clerk.

"I don't know, my husband bought it before our wedding because neither of us had a camera for the honeymoon."

The clerk looked confused for a moment. Natalia thought it was because apparently everyone should have a camera before their wedding day, right?

"Well the pictures did turn out great; this was once a top of the line camera."

She handed her the photos and smiled. It looked like she was faking it.

"Well, thank you." Natalia said.

"You're welcome. Have a nice day."

Natalia walked out of the shop and began heading north to central park to meet her friends. She was perturbed by the awkwardness with the clerk. Putting that moment behind her, she then decided to look at the pictures before sharing them with her husband later on. She felt a little wrong about it, but was pretty excited now that they were finally in her possession and Vinnie was laid back guy, he didn't take moments like this as seriously.

The first picture was of Vinnie leaning over the railing looking down to the majestic falls. The clerk was right about the quality of camera because you could see the water droplets spraying out of the mass of gravity forcing the water off the cliff. It made her smirk a little because she remembered being so worried that he would fall over the railing. The second picture was the falls in the summer, which confused her. Before studying the second picture for more than a couple of seconds she began to flip frantically through the others. Nothing seemed right. They were of all different time periods. They were the same place, all Niagara Falls, but different seasons and times of day. Then something even more peculiar caught her eye. In one of the pictures was Vinnie sitting on a bench, very close to a woman, a woman who wasn't Natalia. They were embracing. She was on his lap. Vinnie didn't look happy in the picture; Natalia wasn't happy looking at it either. In fact she was furious. She thought the camera was bought that day, and she thought that Vinnie had never been to Niagara Falls. With a one hundred and eighty degree turn she almost collided with the person behind her and a picture almost slipped out of her grasp. In this one the woman and Vinnie were kissing. Since she was furious seeing the gentle embrace, the kissing created a new limit to her anger. She began running back home. The girls could wait.

Vinnie was sitting on the couch enjoying a bowl of Cinnamon Toast Crunch when his wife stormed in the front door. It didn't take a genius to recognize her mood.

"What happened?" He asked with a mouthful of cereal.

"You tell me."

She threw the pictures on the coffee table and they spread out surprisingly well enough to show the content of some of some key players in the mix. He put down his cereal bowl and glanced up at his wife who had a twitch in her face due to her current state. He began flipping through the pictures. You could see him trying to disguise a small frown when he saw his ex-girlfriend in a couple of them. What was visible in the pictures hit him just as hard as it did Natalia, but he was probably even more confused than she was angry.

"So who is she?" She snapped.

"Honey, that's Maria."

"Maria?! You said you've never been to Niagara Falls before. What else don't I know about your past relationships?"

"Natalia, I haven't been there before, I promise. Please calm down this must be the wrong camera or something."

"This is you. In Niagara Falls. This is not the wrong camera, damn it! I want you to tell me what's going on!"

"I don't know! I'm being honest I don't know what this is. Baby, I love you. I haven't been with another girl since our first kiss."

Natalia made a grunt, stormed out of the living room, and then became silent in the bedroom. Vinnie began to examine the pictures. His heart was probably racing faster than Natalia's. Here was his ex-girlfriend on his lap, in a place he's never been before, in the stack of photos of his and his wife's honeymoon. The worst part of it was the impossibility of it all. Unlike Natalia though, the kissing picture wasn't what grabbed his attention. It was a subtle picture of the HSBC tower that told the date. November 17th, 2010. It was almost a full year into the future.

Vinnie, almost with a hint of fear in his voice, yelled into the other room, "Honey, you have to see this."