

The Phone Call

On a warm afternoon, a round glass patio table adorned the hotel patio. One tall glass of Coca-Cola sat across from a short whiskey glass filled halfway with Hennessy, sporting three large ice cubes. Little droplets of water trickled down the sides of each glass, leaving tiny puddles underneath. The French glass doors leading to the hotel room were slightly ajar, inviting a gentle breeze onto the patio. A woman in a red and white striped long tube top maxi dress sat on the edge of the bed, holding the telephone receiver to her ear. Isaiah observed her conversation as he took a sip of his Hennessy. She nodded in agreement with whoever was speaking on the other end, pressing the black receiver against her left ear again.

With a graceful motion, the woman removed her oversized straw floppy hat, allowing her long hair to cascade over her shoulders. Isaiah's dress shoes echoed with a click-clack sound as he stood at the patio door, prompting her to hold up her right index finger to silence him while she ended the call.

"What did they say?" Isaiah's nervousness was evident, and he almost dropped his drink.

With her oversized dark shades on, Erica walked past him onto the patio. Standing in the sunlight, the reflection off her diamond-hooped earrings made Isaiah squint as he looked in her direction. Taking a sip of her now watered-down Coca-Cola, she said, "Come sit with me." But Isaiah couldn't sit still. "I need to know if the package is on its way," he said, pacing back and forth in the room.

"Please, dear, come sit with me; I hate to drink alone," Erica said sincerely, stretching her hand toward him. Isaiah obliged, removing his impeccably tailored black suit jacket and placing it across the bed where Erica sat. Joining her on the patio, he crossed his legs and took another sip of his drink.

"Why are you so calm at this time, Erica?" Isaiah demanded.

“Because worrying doesn’t do me any good in situations like this; we must learn to practice patience,” Erica replied calmly, tapping her acrylic French-tipped manicured nails against the patio table's glass top.

“You are worried, huh?” Isaiah noticed her nervous smile.

“I don’t like change. I like our lives and our friends. Things are about to change,” Erica expressed her pessimism.

Isaiah inquired, “What did the lawyer say on the phone?”

“Our first package will be delivered to this room any minute,” Erica responded.

Beyond the patio, the sounds of a pool party from other guests filled the air. Seventies R&B played through the speakers surrounding the in-ground pool. The smell of mesquite charcoal wafted around, accompanied by children’s laughter. A voice yelled, “CANNONBALL,” followed by a large splash. Isaiah went inside and sat on the edge of the bed, concealing his excitement from Erica. She tried to read his body language, but the noise from the family reunion by the pool made it challenging. The phone rang again like a fire alarm, startling Erica. Despite the distractions, she couldn’t make out what Isaiah was saying.

At last, he hung up and stood in the patio doorway, saying, “Come in honey; it’s almost time.” Erica hurried to comply, sitting on the edge of the second bed, as close to Isaiah as possible. He sat on the other bed, facing her, resting his elbows on his thighs.

“I don’t like change,” she confessed, “Change is not always a good thing.”

“Today is the day that all things become new for us, so I believe anything is possible,” Isaiah reassured her. He leaned back on the bed, crossed his ankles, and rested his head on the headboard. Just as he closed his eyes, there was a knock at the

door. Uncertain about what he heard, Isaiah initially ignored the sound. But when a second knock, louder this time, came through, he sat up, looking at the distressed Erica.

“Did you get the ticket?” Erica asked. Isaiah patted his left chest pocket and replied, “Yeah, right here. This is it, Erica.”

The third knock sounded more urgent, akin to the police banging the door. Isaiah got up and went to the hotel room door to open it. Erica could hear mumblings between Isaiah and the person at the door before he returned with a black briefcase in hand. Placing it on the bed, he beckoned Erica to stand beside him. They saw millions of dollars in hundred-dollar bills and letters as he opened the briefcase:

“After verifying your winning lottery ticket, we at the Illinois State Lottery congratulate you, Mr. Isaiah Kendall, on winning the Powerball jackpot of eighty million dollars. This is your first million, and the lump sum will be directly deposited into the bank account of your choice in the next six weeks,” read the letter. They exchanged astonished glances, realizing their lives were about to change in the most extraordinary way possible.