

Cockadoodle Nonsense?

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Millington's in the window seat beside me. His face is taut, his forehead creased. I hope nothing outside the usual is gnawing at him today. I too must be careful. In the last couple of months the smallest things, like his forgetting to wipe the bathroom counter or putting the soap back in its holder in the shower stall, have been upsetting me. Was it that I'd overlooked these things before? Or did he start doing them—consciously or unconsciously—to provoke quarrels? Then again, all his years in the Methodist ministry in Barbados, he had a domestic helper to pick up after him.

I began seriously to wonder about this the last week of November. I'd gone for a drink with Dale, a colleague, after we'd both given our Thursday afternoon classes, and on the spur of the moment, we'd decided to go see a film. When I got in, Millington was already home from work and sitting in his pyjamas on the living room couch.

"I wondered where you were."

"I had a drink with Dale, and after that we watched a film."

"At his home?"

I was too surprised to answer.

"Stop pulling at your chin and answer me."

Two can play this game. "Guess if it were on DVD I might have." I paused, waited. No response. "No, at the Forum."

"In case you haven't told him, next time say that you have a spouse. And now's a chance to remind yourself too. Then again, you might be saying like Tyrone: 'Masculinity flirts with Fidelity but they'll never marry.'"

I ignored him. I was in no mood for a quarrel.

He too fell silent and went off to bed before me.

H. Nigel Thomas

At breakfast next morning, he said, "How come I don't know this Dale?"

"He's a loner, the extreme kind ... like you."

"Is that why you're attracted to him?" His eyebrows half-way up his forehead.

My coffee mug was mid-way to my lips. I almost caused a spill and quickly put the cup down.

He snickered.

"Attracted— but not in the way you think."

"Enough that you couldn't send me a text message."

While I was wondering how to respond, he said, "Is Dale gay?"

"Yes. But what does that have to do with anything?"

"Nothing." He chuckled. "Why should it have anything to do with anything? ... I see now why you're often angry with me for no good reason."

I suspected that other things were bothering him. His residency visa, which he got six weeks earlier, had rekindled his job hunting, but all his applications had come to nought. Employers, it seems, couldn't figure out how his divinity training would match the skills they were looking for. Now he works three evenings: Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, at a recycling plant. Got the extra evening when one of the part-time workers quit. I advised him then to save the extra income toward his tuition fees when he starts university fulltime next September. I convinced him too to stop taking courses in psychology and sociology and focus on improving his French. He'll need it for his professional certification when he completes his training to be a social worker.

Two mornings later—the last Sunday in November— I prepared breadfruit, stewed codfish, and a salad of mango, pineapple, kiwi, apple, and strawberry, flavoured with cinnamon and guava syrup for brunch. Food we both love. In the middle of eating, he asked, "Does Dale like this type of food?"

I didn't answer.

He chuckled. "Just trying to locate where he is in your life. You've been spending a lot less time at home."

I said nothing.

"I've been thinking..."

I waited.

"You don't want to know what I've been thinking?"

"Maybe later. I want to enjoy my breakfast and have a peaceful Sunday."

It put an end to the conversation, but Sunday was certainly not peaceful. I stayed in the study, and he divided his time between the bedroom and the living room.

When we got into bed that night, I asked him, "What were you insinuating this morning?"

"It's my turn to stay silent. You had your tit, now I'll have my tat."

"Suit yourself. I guess this is how the road to divorce begins."

He snorted. "Or how to find ways to prevent it."

"I'm not planning to divorce you, Millington." *Unless you push me too far.*
"But if you're asking me to end my friendship with Dale, my answer is: I won't."

"You might not have to divorce me after all. I might save you the trouble."

"Meaning?"

"Let's not get into that right now; you have an 8:30 class."

"Alright."

I didn't sleep that night, nor did he. He twisted and turned and occasionally sighed. Around 05:00, I heard him sobbing, and when I got him to speak, he said he wanted to kill himself. Pressed further, he said he didn't want to mess up any more lives. Dead he wouldn't be an embarrassment to his mother, and I would be free to embark on a fulfilling marriage, that he thinks about Horton's suicide a lot and knows now that Horton had a point. "Alive Horton would have disgraced his family. Life isn't fun when your past stalks you at every turn and casts a pall over your present and your future. And..."

"And what?" Sounded like he was quoting from his journal.

"Horton must have died with the satisfaction that he'd been justly punished for the lie he lived and the lives he'd messed up."

Goodness gracious! This coming two weeks ahead of our trip to St Vincent to inform his mother of our marriage. Then again, Horton's suicide was still fresh, had happened seven weeks earlier. I'd felt that the trip was causing his angst. I wanted to say: what cockadoodle nonsense is this! It might have got him to the truth faster. But he might have clammed up too. Instead, I said, "Did you tell your psychologist about your suicidal thoughts?"

"No. What difference would it make? Her interventions haven't made any difference in our love life."

"You've only just begun therapy. Four sessions. You have eight more with Nadia and after that several with the sex therapist. I mean your therapy has just like started."

"And you think seeing therapists is a great way to spend my spare time?"

"I think that a wounded person who needs rehabilitation shouldn't refuse it."

"About your suicidal thoughts, if it's fear that we might be breaking up that's causing them, put that fear out of your mind. You have your pincers firmly around my heart. If you'll let me, mine would be just as firmly around yours." I kissed him then. "I'll invite Dale by one weekend, just so you'll see he's in no way your rival. He is a principled person. Even if he were attracted to me, he wouldn't act on it. His religion is based on two premises: alleviating some of the pain in the world and refraining from causing anymore. Sounds like something you might have said yourself when you were in the business of delivering sermons... What Tyrone and Lionel say about male promiscuity is true for them. It needn't be for us. Their talk is mostly hyperbole anyway."

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That exchange was on the 30th of November. I'm not in the habit of keeping a journal, but I made a note of it in my agenda. Since then, he and I have been dancing around each other.

I turn my head to look at him. He's staring out the window, his headset on. Three and a half hours of flying remain. I lower my seat, close my eyes, and hope I fall asleep.