



who we are

Marriage- It's All a Grand Illusion (You'll Probably Be Divorced)

Written by Miles R. De Rosa

Jonah and Layla were washing dishes in strained silence. Maddy had finally been put down to sleep a little under an hour ago. The two were exhausted from watching Nemo for the fifth consecutive night. Jonah lazily scrubbed off leftovers from the night's dinner, leaving Layla to then rescrubbed, rinse, dry, and put them away – growing frustrated as she did so. She was a compulsive organizer of the kitchen. Cooking was as much of a passion as it was an obligation for her. If it wasn't, she wouldn't do it. Jonah was a decent cook. He could figure it out.

"Do you ever regret not going to culinary school?" asked Jonah.

"Yea," She replied tensely, putting a plate carefully in the open cabinet above her head.

"Why didn't you?"

"You got me pregnant," she looked intently at the dish she was drying and avoided eye contact with Jonah. "Who knows, maybe I'll go back."

"Maybe," he said skeptically.

"Maybe?" she exclaimed. "What do you mean maybe? If I wanna go, I'll go. You can take care of Maddy," She swiped a dish away from Jonah. It slipped out of her hand and crashed on the floor, shattering. Maddy started to cry. Quietly at first but then a sharp, shrill, shriek. "Fuck," she said and walked briskly out of the kitchen and down the hall into Maddy's room. She picked up the crying baby, red in the face, and flipped on the light in her room.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Miles De Rosa is a young writer from Oakland, California, where he studied creative writing at Oakland School for the Arts. With his writing, Miles attempts to make people confront the uncomfortable terms of their realities.

Jonah soon appeared in the doorway to find Layla cooing the child who continued to yell. "Look, I'd be happy to take more responsibility around here with the kids and the housework and everything but—"

"Oh, would you, Jonah? Would that be all fine by you? The truth is I can't do what's mine since we got together. I've made maybe two choices just for myself in the last five years, and this is where it landed me. Working a part time job and taking care of this kid and cleaning your fucking house while you go out and bring home mediocre money and a shitty attitude, and you're gonna tell me now that you'd maybe be willing to take more responsibility for the kids and the house and the money and whatever else the fuck you could do more of but in reality I bet that plate is still shattered on the kitchen floor and I'm the one who's gonna put this baby down and then go sweep up that mess."

She breathed heavily and looked at Jonah, a dazed look on his face. Maddy was still crying.

Jonah's head started to hurt, and he didn't quite know what to say. He peeled slowly out of the doorway, going to get a glass of water and an aspirin, offering one of each to Layla. She declined hastily and continued to beg Maddy to quiet down.

The night ended with them lying together in bed silently, both looking out the window. The light of the moon shown through their thin curtains. Layla pretended to be asleep and Jonah said nothing. Both of them had forgotten about the plate and it was left there on the kitchen floor

The two both took off their white helmets; the IllusionSimulators.

"Well, that's unfortunate," said Jonah.

"Yea, really encouraging," said Layla. "I hope you enjoy culinary school," said Jonah.

"Well," interjected the overly cheerly proctor, "This was of course just a simulation of the most likely path your lives would fall into given both of your personalities if you were to have any more than six months of correspondence. There is no guarantee. Maybe you would go on to live perfectly happy live, without any resentment to each other. How long have you two been together?"

"About a month," replied Layla.

"That is the recommended time, right?" asked Jonah.

"It is. We believe here at Illusion that to best prevent brutal heartbreak, you come in before things become all too serious. Now that you know that you would most likely end up in a marriage being propped up more by obligation then by love, it is my professional recommendation that you terminate your correspondence. Immediately." He looked at the two with a slight smile and a self-righteous glint in his eye. He wore a white polo shirt with Illusion scrawled over his heart in black cursive. His desk was covered with pictures of happy couples holding their children in front of a plain blue background.

Neither Jonah nor Layla knew what to say. Layla offered to drive Jonah home, but he declined, saying the walk would clear his head. After she left, he called an Uber.

"You got kids?" the driver asked. He was a round man who spoke with a light Greek accent.

"Hm?" Jonah responded, pulling out his earbuds.

"You got kids?" the driver asked again.

"No," said Jonah, and went to put his earbuds back in.

"What about a wife? You gotta wife?"

"Nope, no wife, no kids," he replied dryly.

"Girlfriend?" he asked.

"No, I don't think so," said Jonah.

"You're one of the lucky ones" said the driver. "One of the lucky ones," and then he laughed.

