

Tara Lissa Langhorne

Dr. Maxwell

CRW-2001-70M

26 September 2016

The Nervous Silliness

Tick. Tock. Tick. Tock. . .

My eyes flew from the floor to the wall and latched onto the maddening device. I stiffened and unstiffened my hand, annoyance spurring me to take matters into my own hands before I decided to abandon the notion. The nervous silliness, definitely.

Through my drowsy fog, I scanned the same room we'd been directed to sit in for what felt like an eternity, that stupid clock sounding off every miniscule second. Plain white walls stared back blankly. The cold tile floor stung my exposed toes when they happened to slip out of my sandals. A few worn-out chairs and a couch surrounded an unkempt coffee table, like a secluded prison. There wasn't even any good reading material in this dump: just shallow gossip magazines, whose top pages rustled in the frigid A/C. They would only serve to numb one's troubled mind with trivial fashions, movie premiers, and cheating scandals . . .

I heaved a heavy, tired sigh, my sinuses burning from the overwhelming cleaner smell. I doubted whether it worked to keep hospital sickness down or whether it caused more problems, like the allergic reaction I was convinced it would give me if I sat here much longer.

The metallic double-doors to the infirmary remained a stubborn barrier between us and the truth. Nurses would scurry in and out, carting patients strapped down and stuck with uncountable amounts of equipment. Those gurney wheels smacked as they rotated again and

again, turning my stomach as if it were along for the ride. Yet the doctor, *that* doctor, kept delaying his appearance to tell us the news about my husband—Colton Wilmington.

“He just seized up after dinner at our house, Madison!” Tom Jameson had said, an echo of his voice ringing through my subconscious. “It all happened so fast. Jaimie and I were so scared. I called for help as soon as I could.”

I rubbed one fingernail against another until I pulled a crescent of nail clean off. The eyes of Colton’s face watched me in my mind. My face tightened from all the worry and stress. The nervous silliness, definitely.

Tom was woodenly seated in one of the sagging chairs across from me, wearing his usual way-too-proper suit. He had been my husband’s closest friend and fellow employee for many years. Tom’s forehead creased with concern for his “pal, Colt,” a name I always detested, especially since Tom used it when flattering and sweet-talking my husband. Such occurrences were continually increasing with repetitiveness, a side effect of Colton’s promotion after Daddy Wilmington finally kicked the bucket. Perhaps the association with the power that emanated from the hand of the Wilmington family was too tempting. I was surprised that Tom wasn’t more excited, being the obvious candidate to take over the company, but his idiotic upstanding nature was probably in too much opposition to such a feeling. The ill taste brushed across my lips, the same one I felt every time I thought of Tom’s do-gooder smile. Unfailingly would it surprise me that it wasn’t artificial like his feigning to have actual brain cells. Strange how success is not indicative of smarts.

Slam! went a door like a clap of thunder.

I snapped my head up. There she was, just as expected.

The flame-colored hair of Jaimie Jameson swung about her shoulders and face as she rushed back to collapse onto a couch by her husband Tom. He nervously grinned at her, but she turned her gaze away. I knew she didn't want him to see her guilty red eyes, still full of worried tears. "It's so cold in here; I'll get my coat," she'd said. Just another lame excuse that wouldn't fool anyone except Tom. Just an excuse to run outside and discharge all her emotions, the ones I should've been feeling. She thought I was fooled, too. But I knew what she was and what secret she and my husband had been keeping.

Her thin frame huddled over itself for an awkward moment; then she snatched a magazine from the table and flipped through the pages as though they held a single word each. Of course, she'd read that trash. A shadow fell over my soul, and I foresaw myself being even more upset over someone I cared less for than she did. The nervous silliness, definitely.

Then a thought sprouted. I envisioned them together in my mind alone in his office or somewhere else they could be alone. She approached him with the fullness of romance pinching her flushing cheeks, but Romeo refuses his secret lover's embrace. Her shocked expression said it all. He wouldn't make that scandalous move; he wouldn't leave me for her.

The freak accident, the sudden collapse, the compromising e-mails I'd uncovered—the breadcrumbs weren't hard to follow. My wish had finally come true, and he'd made a choice, a fatal one in the end.

Her rosy lips squeezed into a frown so rigidly, I thought they would burst. Perhaps this was the answer. She murdered him in cold blood. I dismissed this idea but then immediately reconsidered, letting anger and relief wash over me simultaneously. I had to be right, and I would make sure she paid.

The trail I was following ended abruptly with the doctor's return. Colton was indeed dead by poisoning.

All time stopped: I hit a chair in my faintness.

The next moment, I found myself in Tom's car, the scent of leather waking me.

"I'm driving you home, Madison," he said. "Just rest now."

I stared into the ghosts of the black night, and a smile crossed my face. Another vision filled my mind, one where I confronted Colton with all I knew, one where Colton no longer existed. It had all been so easy, and there was no way to prove it, no way to prove I had killed my husband. The nervous silliness was gone.