

Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

Flash Fiction for Guests of the WordFeeder

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In retrospect, had there been anyone to tell the story, it seemed to take forever for the glass to tumble from the edge of the desk to the floor which was no longer where it used to be, losing its few leftover drops of last night's wine along the way to oblivion.

The sound began like rolling thunder, slightly off key, building, not gradually enough, to a deafening crescendo no one would be there to hear, a perverse celebration of something someone had anticipated long ago, perhaps no more than a lucky guess, or maybe a quirk of time and space Einstein's disciples would one day figure out. It was the birthday of a legend – fodder for endless speculation and mind-numbing over-coverage by the network and cable news.

Twenty minutes earlier...

It was a postcard morning, as it had been every day since they arrived in Nassau to celebrate their fifth anniversary. The view out their eighth floor ocean suite might as well have been painted on the glass. The door to the balcony had been open all night, the breezes that were everywhere on Paradise Island pulling the sheer curtain outward, like the flowing white dress of some unseen spirit that had come to watch over them. Below, on the beach by the cove for which the hotel was named, the morning sun reflected off the water coloring the white underfeathers of the sea birds an iridescent turquoise that seemed unreal.

Well-rested, they were up early, anxious to get their cabana chairs in the perfect position for a long day of reading, writing, talking about everything and nothing in particular. Now and then, when it was too hot, they cool themselves with walks in the warm ocean water, and virgin banana daiquiris artfully prepared by one of the always friendly locals at the nearest beach bar. Their first five years had blown by. This week at the Atlantis complex was just the long overdue break they needed.

Atlantis was on Paradise Island, separated by only Nassau harbor from New Providence Island in the Bahamas, a billion dollar resort with hotels, beaches, elaborate pools and water activities, all built around the theme of its namesake, the legend of Atlantis, complete with Hollywood's best quality ruins of the great city that once disappeared beneath the sea. Andy and Carolyn were staying in the more exclusive, more adult, less Disney section of the resort – the hotel with the two story lobby with no walls, the Mesa Grill, and cushioned islands in the middle of the pool to which waiters waded out to bring you drinks made from rum and fresh fruit. They planned to eat at the Grill tonight, either that or go out for conch fritters and shrimp at "Bad News Jack" in the city. They figured they were young, and their colons could take it.

“Honey,” Carolyn was too busy packing her beach bag to see what it was all about, “you’re getting an e-mail from Amanda,” his younger sister.

“I was wondering why we hadn’t heard from her.” Missing a birthday or anniversary wasn’t like Amanda. She was a professor of ancient history at Columbia, and had taken the summer off to do research in Athens on the history of some of the ancient writers. Andy sat down, double clicked, and began reading to himself.

“What’s she have to say?” Carolyn shouted past the open double doors to the bathroom, squeezing herself into the bathing suit she had optimistically purchased one size too small just for their vacation.

“I don’t know. She seems anxious. Doesn’t even mention our anniv... Wait a minute. What’s she talking about?” He was quite for moment while he read the next few paragraphs.

“Apparently, she was doing research on this one writer, who was writing about another writer who he – the first one – claimed had originated the ancient legend of Atlantis.”

“That’s nice,” Carolyn was standing behind him now, her hands on his shoulders, his arms folded in front of their laptop along the edge of the desk near their bed. “Let’s get out of here. I know exactly where I want to sit.” There was this one lone palm tree right at the beach, maybe 20 feet from the where the water and dry sand broke even. Sitting under it was like having your own, personal oasis.

“Hold on for second. She says the originator wasn’t claiming to be writing about something that had happened, but was making a prediction, a prophesy about something that would happen hundreds of years in the future. The guy was some kind of scientist, pretty advanced for his time and actually offered what she thinks might be some crude mathematical calculation as to when it would occur. She’s asked a friend of hers – some Greek geologist she’s been dating...”

“Give me a break.”

“...to help with the translation. She wants us to...”

“Hey, com’on,” she told him, leaning forward to kiss him on the back of his neck, just below his right ear, causing the usual instinctive crunch of his neck toward his shoulder. “You can finish reading and get back to her later.”

“I don’t know, she seems worked up. I mean, look at this writing, not even taking the time to proof what she’s written. It’s not her...”

Carolyn moved her hands from his shoulders to around his neck, faking strangulation.

Andy didn’t need convincing. “Yeh, yeh,” he started to say as he rose up from his seat. “Head for the door. I’ll get my hat.”

Turning to her right to look out and over the balcony. “If you ask me, every room should have its own waterslide directly to the beach.”

Carolyn left for the door, pressing the button to ask housekeeping to make up their room while they were out. Andy, right behind her, just barely slipped into the hallway before the door chunked shut behind him, and they were off, fake racing each other on their way to the elevators.

Minutes later, in their room, the sound of the ocean wafting through the open glass doors was interrupted by the “boop, boop” of the breaking news ticker across the bottom of the notebook’s screen. “USGS scientists are reporting widespread, significant seismic activity in the British West Indies,” the message began. A wine glass next to the computer, still showing the last few ruby drops left over from the night before, began to vibrate, the bottom of the stem tapping, first slowly, and now more rapidly, as it drifted slowly across the glass surface of their desk, and the screen on their laptop went blank.