

Wendy's Procedure

by James Lynn Smith

Wendy heard a light knock on her hospital room door. Placing her diary and pen onto the bedside table, she said, "Come in."

A man with dark hair and mustache, wearing a freshly pressed, brown suit entered. He carried a single red rose.

"Walter," she said. "You're not supposed to be here."

"I know your family wants me out of your life, but I had to see you." He placed the rose beside her on the bed. "Okay if I stay?"

"Maybe for a while," she said. "You look worried." A familiar feeling in her breast softened her pretended sternness. She could never deny Walter. He had been good to her, and the mysteries about his life only made him more interesting. Despite his shady past, he always came when she needed him, even helped her get her through her "episodes."

"I'm okay," Walter said. He moved his face close to her. "I was concerned about you and wasn't able to see you during all the preparations you had to go through."

Wendy noted the sadness in his blue eyes. "Walter, are you apprehensive about the procedure?"

He raised his brows, as if surprised. "Of course not, the doctors know what they are doing." He directed his eyes at the wall. "You'll come out of this in fine shape."

He's worried our relationship won't be the same. "Walter, don't let your imagination go down a negative path. Ideas can take on a life of their own."

“I know that well, my dear. As a writer, your imagination has always been full of romance, adventure, and enigmas that keep me wanting more.” He turned toward the bedside table. “I see your diary is in use now that you’re without your laptop.”

Reaching up to his face, she gently wiped a tear from his cheek. “Walter, you have always been my love. Don’t think otherwise. I couldn’t have made it without you.”

“I wish your family could accept that. Instead they think our relationship has been unwholesome.”

“Think of something else. Where were you born?”

“Near Wichita, Kansas.”

Wendy pushed back with her elbows, nearly sitting up. “I’m from that area too. As long as I have known you, we never talked about this.” *No wonder we have so much in common.* “Tell me, did—”

The door swung open and a nurse entered, followed by two orderlies. They moved a gurney near the bed. “Ms. Thompson,” the nurse said, “we’re here to take you in for your procedure.”

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Weeks later, Wendy began collecting last-minute items from the hospital room. An orderly brought in a bag of her personal property and then went for a wheelchair. She remembered that the doctor seemed satisfied with her progress but she ignored his reference to unhealthy relationships. *What relationships?*

Despite feeling more secure about her manic episodes, Wendy knew she needed to get out more. Some writers isolate themselves too much.

Wendy eyed her diary on the bedside table. It was open and someone had dared to write a memo in it. The handwriting seemed familiar.

Dear Wendy:

You may not remember me after your procedure, but I have always been with you, ever ready for your call. They say I was an addictive obsession with you. That may be true, but I owe you my very life. Please think of me again.

My love always, Walter

P.S.—If I had been more than marks on a page, maybe they would have accepted me.

The handwriting was her own.

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