



2 0 1 6

ATLANTIS SHORT STORY CONTEST

WINNING STORY

Lucky Me

By Anjarna Lake

Word Count: 2.502.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. EXCEPT AS PERMITTED UNDER U.S. COPYRIGHT ACT OF 1976, NO PART OF THIS PUBLICATION MAY BE REPRODUCED, DISTRIBUTED, OR TRANSMITTED IN ANY FORM OR BY ANY MEANS, OR STORED IN A DATABASE OR RETRIEVAL SYSTEM, WITHOUT THE WRITTEN PERMISSION OF THE AUTHOR. [USE THE CONTACT FORM](#) TO REQUEST FURTHER INFORMATION AND TO GET IN TOUCH WITH THE AUTHOR.

Copyright © Anjarna Lake

She wants me to leave him. I say over my dead body.

Lately, he acts like, he is attached to a set of puppet strings. He moves his arms, legs, head, up and down according to the force of the pull by his mother or sister or brother who is his dependents in his own house. Well, it's our house. I did not know that they had the failure to launch syndrome until I came to live with him. He didn't lie but he miss calculated the prior warning for evacuation when volcano ruptures. Even if I knew before we marry, it wouldn't make any difference, that cupid with wings, and the son of Venus never had eyes on him.

It took some time for my pea size brain to realize the fact that the sea is calm before the storm.

Yet nobody could pierce his mouth to attach strings to make it move. His lips are stuck together with a blob of superglue. Sometimes I feel that he wants to move it when he sees me, but he makes it tighter until it makes dimples on his chin. I wasn't sure whether he opens it to brush his teeth, or opens it to talk at work. He used to talk with me before our marriage when we were dating for few years, and up until my first miscarriage. I hear him grinding his teeth at night like rats chew wood at night in Harry Potter's room under a stairway. It makes my teeth numb like you sit on the dentist chair. In the mornings he looks at the bathroom mirror touching his jaws with both hands and trying to open and close his mouth. I keep Panadol on the bench him to take.

He comes to bed after midnight, when he thinks that I'm fast asleep. Sometimes I touch his shoulder or forearms, instantly he becomes stiff like a cat's hair standing up on its back.

In the mornings, I wake up early before everybody else, have a shower, and apply red paprika like powder which they called Sindoor on my front hairline. When I did it for the first time, he shook his head but didn't comment. I make his breakfast, boil the milk 1 min and 35 seconds in the microwave before his mother walks into the kitchen. If not I have to put the milk into a pan and boil it 5 min 45 seconds on the stove before I make the tea for him. I didn't see a piece of meat after I came to live with them. If I didn't work in Coles, I wouldn't know the existence of vegetables. I get to know there are other cooking methods people use apart from a barbeque.

Lately, he goes to work without coming to the kitchen for breakfast, hence I take his teacup on a tray to upstairs with a note. Please drink this. He climbs down the stairs from the bedroom to the garage and coming back from work he goes to his office room until I go to sleep. I gave up talking to him 1 year ago. I survived at home, time spent on learning their language on YouTube.

Sometimes I send him emails or texts to remind him everyday things like the dental appointments to the dentist for grinding. When I washed his clothes I saw the invoice for the dental treatment. He reads my emails and tried. I came to live with him sun or rain. I can't return. He is in my blood.

When I was bleeding in the middle of the living room with my second miscarriage they whispered that it was due to the big gap in my front teeth. I didn't understand their words, they didn't speak English, but his mother showing with hand gestures to his sister, I thought, that this is what it meant, bad luck. They didn't bother to call an ambulance or him.

"It's your toes" her sister pointed out.

"What about my toes?" I looked at my toes.

"See your last toe does not touch the floor when you walk, it will kill my brother"

"It's your mole on the left cheek"

"What about my mole?" I touched my face.

"That's why you had big head baby monster"

Even when we were dating, I didn't get any flowers or chocolate or other usual romantic stuff that girlfriends get from their boyfriends. In fact, most of the time my friends end up with sticks of weed or heart shaped tablets of ecstasy from their boyfriend .By saying that, none of them end up with a wedding with the same guy, but I did. He came to see me every day after his work. He was neat, tall and handsome with a smile of million dollars, every girl at checkouts were envious. His arms were clean without any tattoos and his pants never hang below his waist to show the crack between his bum cheeks. I know he smokes, but never in front of me. He opens the door of his Volvo to me to get in and close it after me. He spreads his white cotton handkerchief on grass

to me to sit down when we walk in Kings Park. I thought he was going out of his mind and at the same time I felt I was Marilyn Monroe with the mole on the cheek and gap in the front teeth.

He is a man of no words, but I didn't miss the speech.

We walked along the Matilda bay hand in hand sunny mornings during the weekends. I squatted in sand, water whirling between my bare ankles, he squatted with me, our fingers entwined. I want his olive skin instead of my freckly yellow skin. We watched dangling antennas of those jelly umbrellas underneath the clear blue water, sun rays reflect on their transparent bodies. When I spread my fingers of my free hand to catch the dancing soft blobs into my palms he held my hand,

"No"

I pushed his hands away and try to touch them again,

"Don't..., it will hurt them."

"What if they hurt me?" I asked

"I'll pee on you"

We smiled at each other and then at dancing jellyfish. I wanted to take them home in my handbag.

He didn't touch me under any circumstances, I mean my unmentionables, after I told him that I was a virgin. He didn't even bother to give a kiss, I regretted my big mouth.

She looked around our tiny 3 bedroom house and wrinkled her nose. She asked for a dowry for her son before our marriage. My father lifted his eyebrows until it disappeared below his hair line which was far in the back of his bald head. I was sure that he didn't have more than 12 \$ and 50 cents in his bank account all his life. Weddings weren't on my father's agenda to get rid of his 4 daughters, they were all pregnant except me, even before they drop out from school at ninth grade.

I wasn't sure why he wanted to marry a girl like me. I'm not Miss Universe and just managed to push through high school to be a checkout chick in Coles. We don't have a mother since she is in

and out of alcohol rehab most of her life and everybody around us thinks that my father belongs to a bikie gang.

My father insisted me on marrying him.

I nodded. I just checked my basics, he made my heart beat fast and tingling in all the right places just by holding my hand.

During the dinner, they talk in their language, which I could pick up little. They talk about the money, the topic is mainly the money, education of his brother, the marriage of his sister and other health expenses for his mother. He is like a statue, I can't see, he moves his eyelids even once at dinner.

Sometimes she points to her front teeth with her fingers then she looks at me, shook her head and walk away from the table muttering all the way to upstairs. She talks fast and loud like croaking bubble frog after a rain, arms moving up in the air, an apron of lose muscles of the arms move like loose skin of the neck of Mastiff. Her eyes were large like a bullseye, her forehead wrinkling and she was like splattering hot oil on to him from a sizzling prawn dish. It burned his eyes which made a twitch at corners of his eyes frequently which he was not used to doing.

She spread out the photos on the table of a few females from their skin colour, and pointing to each one of them and explaining who and what they are. I understood few things from the conversation. I looked at him. He was looking down at the plate and moves his fingers around the edge of the plate. I assumed that they were asking him to divorce me.

I told my father that I could not stay there any longer.

At the end, my father told me,

"He gave me 500.000\$ of dowry to give to his mother before the marriage"

He started staying in his office room after the death of our son who lived only 3 months with enlarging heavy head like a size of a watermelon with all the visible branching veins and fluid there. I couldn't close my eyes for a second during this 3 months. He was lying between us. I did not want to keep him in the cot. His tiny eyes downcast and he couldn't move his neck due to the

heavy enlarging head. His body was like a match stick. Even before the healing my inside he left us forever.

I start to light a candle in front of the man with a few heads and limbs carrying swords and other paraphernalia in his many hands. I start to pour milk onto the tree they grew inside the house like Bonsai tree.

They didn't bother to look at me. All his relatives and friends who came weekends stopped coming. Like they thought they would catch it from my little one. During this 3 months, he held my hand once when I was holding our son in the crook of my arm and watching him dying peacefully.

He starts eating outside and he comes home only to sleep. During the weekends, he stays in the office, sometimes looking away from the window picking his eyebrows. Sometimes doing things in his computer.

Very rarely he goes out. He took off all the pictures of the man with many heads and limbs from the wall and he threw away the Bonsai plant into the green bin.

He picks his skin until it bleeds and starts to wear long sleeve shirts. His eyebrows became thin.

His brother and sister left the house, after a massive argument with him one night, I didn't know why I assumed he asked them to leave.

I took his mother to the doctors for her repeat prescription and blood pressure checks every 3 months or so. I was amazed to hear, how good her English was.

I start shopping for groceries and cooking for his mother the way she wants it. The house was filled with the smell of onion, garlic, and oil. When I first came to his house it made me throw up, he laughed aloud. I couldn't remember when I saw his smile for last time. His left cheek dimple and the crooked tooth left upper corner makes his smile so natural.

She starts to sit in the office room until he comes after work, doors were closed, and I didn't bother to listen. Rest of the day time she talks to her relatives loud and fast, watch TV and eat cheesecakes, lying down on the sofa and her plump legs resting on the coffee table. I have never seen plump legs like that. She can't wear normal socks, I had to cut the socks on sides to push it

on then I saw her crooked toes on the feet which were overlapping on each other, she looked away. That was how she became a widow long time ago.

The night was still and silent. I was waiting for that moment, for him to break this silence. He looked at the ceiling, his breathing is soft and long. I watched his chest moving up and down and his hands on his chest like in a dead body in a coffin, fingers crossed in the mid chest. I looked at the wall beyond him. Shadows from the branches of a tree were waving on the wall.

Then the silence was broken...

I heard the bubbling sound like you gargle salt water for your sore throat, gasping noise and the heavy thud which made me push away the sheet on me and lift the head from the pillow while holding his wrist tight.

I sat down on the bed and listen one more second, ghostly shadows on the wall waved faster to the wind, a dog was howling, it was bad luck to hear howling. Was that noise from inside the house or outside the house? I heard the bouts of a cough and another crash of glass. I stood up in lightning speed, ran toward the noise which was her room at the end of the corridor and he followed me.

She slumped against the wall, holding her chest with both hands, her eyes rolled up and white froth drooling at the corner of her mouth. She was trying to breathe out but her mouth remained open and her tongue was falling backward. She tried to raise her arms up with her loose skin attached to it, but it fell floppy and waved like a flipping pancake.

I shrieked and bend down to her. He held my hand, stopped me bending and pulled me backward saying

"No" his superglue dried up, his lips were trembling like a fish out of the water. His mouth opened up like a goldfish in a fish bowl trying to breathe.

I shook his arm away and turned around and ran for the telephone, tripping over hitting on him.

I grabbed the receiver of the phone mounted on the wall. I pressed one 0. Before the next two zeros, he wrapped his right arm around my waist, held my hand with his left thumb and index

fingers which was tighter than the grip of an adjustable spanner. I dropped the receiver with tangled cord and it swung like a pendulum of the grandfather's clock on the air while the receiver was spinning like a spinning toy and untangling. He whispered in my ears,

"Don't"

I could hear her struggle of gasping become slower and softer at the far end of the corridor- like air escaping out of a balloon.

END