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Mercedes

“. . . the seven year itch . . .”

He was younger.
Pop!

There he goes, popping into my head again, Mercedes Wilson said to herself.

He was probably the same age that the redheaded Titleist representative was when Mercedes’s husband of almost two decades, the father of her two children, the one and only famous pro-golfer Mason Wilson, decided to cheat on Mercedes seven years ago while on tour in San Diego at Torrey Pines.

Mercedes figured it out while watching a professional golf tournament on television with their daughter, Star. Mercedes noticed the bright red hair of the white woman who followed Mason like a love-struck puppy. Seeing the woman made the hairs on the back of Mercedes’s neck stand straight up. The hairs on the woman’s head and the strands of hair in Mason’s red Benz were exact. Mason won the U.S. Open Golf Championship that day, but he nearly lost his wife. He claimed to have had casual sex with the woman whenever he lost a tournament. Win or lose, Mercedes made it clear that his behavior was unacceptable, and that sex with someone other than one’s spouse is never casual.

After intensive family counseling and much prayer, Mercedes forgave him. She warned him that if he ever violated their marriage vows again, she would take the kids and leave him in a heartbeat. Nevertheless, she had to accept the fact that after all the years of their union, her famous husband, Mason Wilson, was an adulterer.

And now, it was Mercedes who was playing hide-and-seek with the notion of infidelity herself.

Things would have been fine if that young member of the Los Angeles City Council would have simply stayed the heck out of her head.

She tried convincing herself that what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas . . . and what happened in Vegas was that she had an encounter with an elected official named Ryan.

She wanted to still believe she could practice what she preached seven years ago about being faithful. Mason may not have had another affair since then, but this time, the seven year itch was biting the hell out of his wife, and it bit hard.

Pop!

“Good morning, Cedes.” Mason greeted his wife using the nickname he had created when they first met in college back at U.S.C.

The sound of Mason’s voice propelled Mercedes from the past into the present on this summer morning in July. The sun hadn’t quite shed its offspring with the world. There was not a cloud in the azure sky. The usual summer breeze from the Pacific had not yet breathed its usual breath.

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From the backyard, the barking from their new blue-pit, one-year-old, blue-eyed Nadia, served as their regular good morning hello. Their chocolate lab, Kailua, who was a true family member, passed away at the age of eight from lymphoma. Though devastated, the family decided it was best to get another dog right away, and it seemed that the new dog, Nadia, bonded to Mattie more than anyone else. Mattie, the beloved matriarch of the family, mother to Mason, Claude, and Torino Wilson, was bedridden and living in Mason and Mercedes's home, suffering from vascular dementia.

Sporting a cognac-colored shoulder length bob and wispy bangs, Mercedes spoke while heading to her oval desk in the downstairs office of their five-bedroom home. She was dressed in an off-the-shoulder purple dress with gold high heels.

"Hey there. You're up mighty early." Her oversized chandelier earrings shook as she spoke. She set her purse on the desk.

"I am." Mason, now forty six years-old, had retired from golf to spend more time with his family. He had been home for the past two years, and was now working on his second book. The first book, *Shadow on the Green*, was his auto-biography about his experiences with racism and what he called the true color of money. The title made the New York Times bestsellers list. And now he was half-way through the last title of his two-book contract about how to relate the execution of golf to the execution of life, called *Grip It and Rip It*.

Their new home was smaller than the previous, yet equally as immaculate. Back in 2003, the girlfriend of Mason's brother, Claude, was murdered on the front porch of Mason and Mercedes's home on Thanksgiving Day in front of the entire family.

To Mason, moving was a no-brainer. They had thought about moving outside of Los Angeles, but after being in Ladera for more than a quarter century, they decided to stay in the 90056 zip code, moving from their custom home on Bedford Avenue to a newer home on Ladera Crest Drive, also in upper Ladera.

It was Claude, owner of Wilson Realty, who found the dramatic, architectural style four-thousand square foot home. It had vaulted ceilings, two stone fireplaces, and distressed oak hardwood floors. The first floor library had built-in bookshelves, a wet-bar, and his-and-her desks positioned smack dab in the middle of the room, with bright red leather couches against opposite walls.

Mason sat on the sofa reading the *Wall Street Journal*, sipping from a coffee mug. He wore his black Nike fitted cap and matching sweat suit. He had already been out for his morning walk. Though Sean John was Mason's clothing sponsor during his career, Nike was now Rashaad Wilson's sponsor. Mason had handed over his golf club-baton to his very popular and successful young son.

Mercedes asked, "You're usually right back in the bed by the time I leave. Weren't you up late, writing?"

"I was, but I got on up while you were in the shower. I have a meeting this morning. Needed to get in some cardio, get my adrenaline going." He placed his coffee mug on the end table and looked at his gold watch. "I've gotta be downtown by eleven."

"Really? Why?"

"You know Elijah? Elijah Cummings, former head of the Urban League?"

"From Maryland. Of course I do. We saw him and his wife last year on the cruise we took to Barbados."

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“He called me last week. Said he read *Shadow on the Green*. He mentioned there’s a vacated seat coming up on the Los Angeles City Council. I guess the current president of the council, Eric Garcetti, discussed the vacancy with Elijah.”

“Okay.” She waited for more.

“So, Eric wants to meet with me to discuss the possibilities.”

“As a city council member?”

“Yes.”

Pop! “Wow.”

“Wow, what?”

“It’s just that I didn’t know, I mean, we didn’t discuss it, and here you are on your way to a meeting about a career in politics.”

“I didn’t confirm until yesterday. You got home late and by the time you ate and we chatted for a second, you knocked out before I could get out of this office. I should’ve talked to you. I’m sorry.”

“Mason, it’s all good. We’ve both been busy. But think about it. As far as you making a move like this, I mean, you basically have no background in politics.”

“Cedes, you know I was studying government at S.C.”

“Yeah, but that wasn’t your major. Honey, don’t get me wrong. I’m happy for you. Just the fact that you’re even considering it is very cool.” Mercedes opened her briefcase and rummaged through the files.

“Listen, you know I’ve spent most of my life hitting a golf ball. From the time I was young golf had me hooked. It was unpredictable and that was my thrill. Now, my life is as predictable as it gets. I sit here, day in and day out, writing most of the time, checking up on Rashaad and his pro-career, checking in with Star and her new job with the symphony in Atlanta, and watching you continue to grow your modeling business. I try my best to spend time with Mom. Turns out I worked right through the kids being home when they were younger. And now that I’m home, they’re gone, living their own lives. I just really need something new. I need something challenging. And besides, I think public life would agree with me. Tell me you’ll support me on this.” His last sentence sounded like a question.

“Oh, you know I will. I just want to keep it real as far as the background that’s needed, that’s all.” She put some papers in her briefcase and closed it.

“All that’s needed is that the candidates live in the district, which is District Eight for this spot, that’s us, and that they are qualified voters. From what I read, the pay is just under two-hundred-thousand, plus a car and other incentives, which is not even my motivation. I’d still need to make money in other ways. I’d just do it to see where it leads. To see if I can make a difference with my radical self.” He took another sip from his coffee mug.

Mercedes nodded and was all ears.

He continued, “What I’m doing today is having a meeting at City Hall with the president of the city council and a couple of people on his staff. It’s just a meeting. Bernard Parks is vacating his seat in May so it depends on how many applications they get from people who want to apply for it. It would be temporary until the regular election in 2013, and at that point I’d need to campaign. We’re talking about spending some money to campaign and I’d need to go door-to-door if need be.” He focused on her hips. His eyes were suddenly flirty. “Maybe you could be my campaign manager.”

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A chuckle escaped her lips. "Yeah, I think I could, and I would. And you know I'm happy for you. I'm proud of you. And I support you. I'm sure Eric Garcetti knows who you are, not to mention the Mayor, and actually, with the number of people who are fans of yours, name recognition alone would get you elected. And of course I have complete faith in you if this is what you want. Anything I can do to help, I'm here."

"Everything's good. I'm just happy to be getting up and out of this house. Writing all day can drive you batty. These four walls are working my nerves."

"I'm sure. You know, maybe you can hire a ghost writer. I'm surprised the publisher didn't offer one."

"No, thanks. I'm good. I'm too independent for that. Just need something different to add to the mix right now."

"Okay. I did notice that you don't even get out to the fairway with the guys anymore. That's not like you."

"Sometimes I do."

"Not like you did when you first retired."

"Deadlines got me tied down, Cedes, I'm telling you. Not for long, though. I should be finished soon."

"Okay. And as far as the meeting, will you call me when you're done? Let me know how it goes."

"I will."

"Good." Mercedes took hold of her purse.

"Have you checked in on Mom yet this morning?"

"Not yet."

"Lucinda tells me Mom hasn't spoken a word in days."

She said, "I noticed. It's bad enough she can't get out of bed on her own or even turn over. And she has to wear that dang colostomy bag and diaper. But I think with her not being able to speak, that's the worst part. It's as hard on her as it is for us to see her lose her abilities. Mamma's always been a talker. They brought up the topic of the non-verbal stage of the disease at the last Alzheimer's board meeting. I think it might be time to get her to the doctor for a checkup."

"I agree."

"I'm on pins and needles when it comes to her."

"I know you are. Thanks for taking care of my mom, well, our mom, yours and mine, like you have. I'll head into her room in a minute. Maybe I'll take Nadia in with me."

"Good idea. Besides Star, Nadia's the next best thing for Mamma." Mercedes turned around to unhook her phone from the wall charger.

Mason's eyes went from her back, to her behind, to her legs, all but licking her down. "Damn, you're hot, wifey."

"Well, thanks, hubby." She gave a tiny grin and then turned to stand before him.

"I'd say hot enough to be a political wife."

She replied, "Oh really? I'd say you look good enough to run this town or the country, any day of the week if you choose to."

"We'll start with the council seat first." He came to a stance. Bowlegged and over six feet, he picked up his coffee mug and took a seat at his large mahogany desk.

"Deal." Mercedes turned toward the door as though ready to head out.

"Plus, I was just thinking about getting our taxes audited." He clicked the mouse, eyeing the computer screen. "You know how the world of politics can be. And also,

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keeping our nose clean is critical.” He perused the page, reading a new message. “Here’s an email from Eric Garcetti’s assistant.” He paused and read again. “She said the first person I’ll be meeting with is Ryan Germany. I’ve heard of him. He represents the Ninth District.”

Pop. Pop. Shit!

Mercedes stopped and cleared her throat. “Okay.” She faced him again. “Good luck.”

“Thanks. You gone?” He looked over at her.

“Yeah.” She walked back to him and leaned down, giving him a kiss. She noticed the subtle trace of alcohol. Possibly cognac. She kissed him again just to be sure. *Damn. Not again.* She shook her mind out of its trickery and asked as she turned toward the door, “You gonna feed Nadia?”

“Yep. I’ve got her.” He then said as she walked out of the library, “Love you.”

“Ditto.” Their trademark reply.

If ditto meant *me too*, Mason was in for a rude awakening, and a very dirty political nose.

And Mercedes was in for a reality check revisit from a twenty year-old monster.

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