

## Some-When, Ages Gone

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TODAY WAS A red-letter day.

It started like any other, but that wasn't going to be the case for long, for today was the day I would marry my darling, Julie.

When we met, I could hardly believe my good fortune. It was a year ago to the day when I first laid eyes upon Julie. I was at a specialist shop in the city that almost exclusively sold hats. While I was browsing I locked eyes with her. She had emerald green eyes that seemed to twinkle in the light; she gave me a smile and it was stunning. She had dark skin and a slim waist. I had honestly never beheld such beauty before. With great difficulty I wrenched my eyes away from her and began looking at the hats again, I wasn't brave enough to talk to her. I didn't have to be. Hat in hand, she came up to me and put it on my head.

"I think this would suit you," she said, her voice like the singing of angels. I turned to say something, but it was too late, she was already walking away. I felt a sense of loss right then and there, even though I'd only found out about her existence thirty seconds before. With a heavy heart I took the hat off my head to look at what she'd picked. Something fell out of the hat and I looked at the ground to see what it was. It was a slip of paper, with something scrawled hastily in purple ink on it.

"No," I breathed. "It can't be. A girl that beautiful wouldn't waste time with a guy like me." Slowly I reached down, picked it up and read it: *You should wear this on our first date, Julie xoxo.* Below that was her number. After a day or so I did call that number and the rest is history.

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Some would call it a whirlwind romance or a shotgun wedding, but to us it seemed perfectly natural. When I proposed it made absolute sense to both of us, as we have but one life to live. Suddenly I realised I was still lying in bed reminiscing, when I should be going to pick up the ring. I whisked myself out of bed and was out the door in minutes. I dove into my Chrysler, and reversed recklessly out of the garage. I had a place to be after all, and I couldn't be late.

Arriving at Tiffany & Co. I asked for my ring. The attendant reached into the glass case and pulled it out, placing it before me with a remarkable amount of grace. The ring was a masterpiece. 22 carat gold, wrought to invoke thoughts in the viewer of tree branches and vines. One could follow a single 'branch' inside and out of the ring twice before it went back to where you started. The *pièce de résistance* however was the gem embedded in the ring. An amethyst about a centimetre across that glimmered and shone with a radiance I hadn't thought possible. Indeed it seemed to capture the light, intensify it and then shine it back; making faint rainbows shimmer across its surface. I had originally planned to get a standard diamond ring, but this one caught my eye. It was almost like it had been made especially for Julie, whose favourite colour was purple and who had a deep appreciation for nature. The attendant brandished the case and placed the ring softly inside. I had already paid for it so I thanked the attendant, took the ring and left.

My next stop was the church where I would be getting changed and preparing for the wedding. Some people claim they get cold feet when faced with matrimony. I felt no such thing. In fact I felt nothing but anticipation. Today was the first day of the rest of my life with her, a wonderful thought it seemed to me. I pulled up to the church and headed to the room where my best man, Tyrone, had left my suit for the day. It was a plain room suited to an average motel, not a church that frequently hosted weddings. "No matter," I muttered. I wasn't here to stay; I was here to get prepared. My tuxedo stood out against the plain white linen of the bed it was lying on. I started getting dressed. It fit well and was easy to get into. It was plain black, with a black bowtie and a white shirt. A bit basic really, especially by my standards, but I had a twist. I still had the hat from our first meeting and our first date. It was more battered than I would have liked, however for a year of being worn to almost everything, it was still in remarkable

condition. I sat down and relaxed for a minute before a knock on the door surprised me.

“Roman, it’s Tyrone! You ready yet?” he yelled through the door with enough noise to wake the dead.

“Yeah come in man,” I replied softly.

The door swung open and Tyrone strode through. He took in the room with a quick glance before settling on me. Tyrone was big, easily six feet tall and was strong. Between his physique and dreadlocks down to his shoulders, you would be forgiven for being intimidated until you found out he was actually quite gentle. “Are you for real brother!?” he exclaimed incredulously, while flipping the hat off my head. I grabbed it and replaced it on my head, albeit on an angle.

“I figured it was a sweet thought,” I said attempting to defend my position.

He laughed and shook it off before changing the topic. “You ready for this bro?” he asked a lot more softly. His usual boisterousness was replaced with a measure of sombre respect.

“Yeah, I can’t wait. Can you hold the bling?”

He nodded and I gave it to him and watched him stuff it in his pocket. I cringed, but I knew he would take good care of it. We passed the time talking about this and that until I was due to appear at the altar. As we left I adjusted my hat one last time before halting at the doors of the church. I took a deep breath and Tyrone patted me on the shoulder. Steeling myself I pushed open the door and strode to the front. All eyes were looking at me and some people whispered, undoubtedly about the hat. But I didn’t care. Taking my place with Tyrone beside me, I waited for Julie to arrive. I didn’t have to wait long. The church became hushed as the doors swung open. There was my soon-to-be wife, looking the image of angelic grace as she walked down the aisle in a gown that fit so snugly it left little to the imagination. She took her place beside me and gave me a smile that I returned. The time had arrived.

The priest did his usual speech then said, “This couple have written their own vows for each other.” As agreed Julie read hers first.

“Roman, when I first saw you at the Snapback store, I knew I wanted you to swag me. I will love every minute we have together, partying, shopping for Snapbacks and bling, blazing it, and clubbing. We will live fast and die young because YOLO, but I want to be YOLO with you.”

The priest coughed and had a weird look on his face. I didn't understand why, but it didn't matter because it was my turn.

"Julie, you have always been a swagged-out bitch. My favourite one in the whole hood." Someone in the audience gasped and the priest had a stricken look, but Julie just smiled, close to crying from happiness. "I knew that you would be the babe to get me to stop playing and get me to settle down for real, so I got you some bling to match yo' swag."

On cue Tyrone went looking for the ring, but couldn't remember which pocket it was in.

"Shit Tyrone! Get it together," I whispered hoping no one heard me.

"Sorry boss, here," he said brandishing the ring box. I opened it and proceeded to slip the contents onto Julie's finger.

"To show that I'll never swag anyone else ever again, YOLO," I said before kissing the ring.

The priest didn't react immediately and shook himself when he recovered. He then proceeded to read the script I had given him.

"If anyone knows why these two shouldn't be joined in holy swagtromony, let them speak up, or forever hold their peace."

No one spoke up.

"You may now kiss your . . ." the priest scowled before finishing, "Your ho . . . ugh."

I paid his groan no mind as I kissed my new wife.

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Twenty years had passed since the day of my wedding and so had Julie. The hard partying lifestyle had got to her and she died from alcohol poisoning. On her death bed she looked into my eyes and whispered, "YOLO," before taking her last breath, and expiring.

I thought the tale of our swag was an enduring one, one to rival Romeo and Juliet. And so I wrote this account entitled *Some-When, Ages Gone*, or *SWAG* for short, to chronicle the life of Roman and Julie. I closed the tome, tears welling up in my eyes. For on the wall opposite me was the snapback from our very first meeting, a shrine to my ho, Julie, and a memory of a swaggier time.