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about 1900 words

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## ALISON

by

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Alison Rivers, 24, a biracial handicapped woman; flowy light brown curls surround her face while she sits on the patio, short breaths of steam come from her nose and mouth. She glares into the high brick flower beds. The red flowers lay wilted but black from the cool night frost. Alison picks weeds one by one. She likes to add her personal touch; sets up the patio by the change of season, yellows with green for summer, burnt orange or maroon for fall. Huge decorative clay pots sit at both sides of the brick patio that stretches the width of the five-thousand square foot home. An array of what were white pansies with multiple tropical Hosta plants align the plush cool dewy lawn. The crackle of crisp leaves under the wheels of her chair when it moves. The fall breeze parts her hair to sweep it from her face. Exits from the house, Frank Rivers, 30, a tall, dark brown, African American man, bald head with a muscular build. He greets her with a smile and a thumb-drive in hand -- he lifts her chin to kiss her face.

"Alison, I want you to have a great one today," says Frank. Try to relax without the worry of bills we have acquired." Alison annoyed by his wet kiss on her face.

"I can't help but to think about what a mess my life has become," says Alison. It consumes me constantly. Frank, I hate to sit around so much. I have gained fifty pounds more than I was before the accident."

"You have come so far from being on the respirator to being able to get out of bed on your own," says Frank. He places the thumb-drive in her hand.

"If you can put these into the spreadsheet and call the investors today maybe it will take your mind off things like that," says Frank. Alison turns her head to roll her eyes. I must admit the company has had significant gains since you came aboard."

Frank starts a fire in the brick gas fireplace. Alison removes the garden gloves from her hands to wrap up into the blanket on her lap. Frank pauses when he stares at the blanket his mother made for him on Alison's lap.

"I miss my mother very much," says Frank.

He takes the blanket to cover the bottom of Alison's legs. Alison remembers not to interrupt him when he goes on about his mother. This time she cannot take it anymore.

"I understand she was always there for you, but I am not her," says Alison.

"Where does that come from, Alison?" Asks Frank. Whenever we are in a moment of peace you bring up my mother."

"I didn't bring her up, Frank -- *you* did," says Alison. I don't want to come off unappreciative of your mother."

"But you did," says Frank.

"She seemed like a magnificent person."

"I hope you would you respect that about her," says Frank.

“I had my own life, my own business, now I am at your beck and call,” says Alison. Frank has a lump in his throat with pressure in his chest whenever Alison gets like this. He doesn’t understand what to do. Frank clinches his teeth back and forth.

“Tell me what you would rather do with your time now that we have a two-million-dollar home *you* required when we got married, Alison?” asks Frank.

"The extra space on the property was for my yoga retreat business and you know it," says Alison. I want to join the local gym."

"Why the gym of all places?" asks Frank.

"The aquatic workouts are therapeutic," says Alison.

“I can get someone else to input the data into spreadsheets for me,” says Frank. If it weren’t for my mother’s help, I wouldn’t have this successful business to pay for this home and I would be stuck in some nine to five.” Frank walks away like he’s taught Alison a lesson.

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Alison at the local gym. She attempts to lift her legs to climb into the pool lift chair, she reads a new notice on the wall. *As of October 1, 2021, the gym will be closed due to reconstruction.*

“Warford county is two hours away,” says Alison. My legs tense up when I sit for too long.” Alison lowers her head. I cannot recover in time," mumbles Alison. She wheels herself to exit. “I will never be able to keep the promise I made to the kids for charity or to myself."

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Alison returns home to Frank in his favorite chair. The caregiver helps Alison remove her coat. The caregiver signals goodbye. Frank starts a fire in the fireplace. The orange blaze whooshes big. Alison helps herself to the sofa from her wheelchair.

"You get around so well," says Frank.

"I want one of those hot tubs that swims like a pool," says Alison.

Frank tries to avoid the conversation. He heads into the kitchen; he returns to serve nootropic hot totties to wind down for the evening. It helps Alison to sleep well through the night without any medical side effects.

"The hospital called," says Frank. They want you to participate in a trial." Alison wheels herself to the fire. She tosses a magic flame pack into the fire. The fire expands, it turns red, then to multicolor.

"I told all of you I will not undergo anymore experimental surgeries or medicines that keep me from my normal routine," says Alison. My body has been through enough the last six months."

"Your sister and your cousin can come to help you," says Frank.

"Oh, like they did for only two weeks when we had to hire caregivers?" asks Alison. I used to think that hired personal medical care was so impersonable, now I see it is best to count on them when family is too busy".

"My family operates a bit different than yours," says Frank. We stick together." Alison's eyebrows wrinkle to the middle.

"That is why I love and respect my mother for what she did to help my business grow," says Frank. "My family struggled to make ends meet." Alison cannot believe her ears.

"Your family structure was dynamic in a way you all did not have to depend on each other." Alison struggles to listen to the same stories about his family.

"You care to explain what you mean by that remark?" asks Alison.

"Every generation had to pool together to help the others," says Frank.

"Mine didn't?" asks Alison. "I don't plan on living like this for the rest of my life, Frank. My family has their own businesses." Alison's face turns a darker shade of red. "I plan to get back to work with my yoga business." Frank throws his hand to his forehead.

"I just --," says Frank. Alison attempts to stand and interrupts him before he could finish.

"Between the start of Covid and the accident, I had an international company with customers flying in and out for retreats on the grounds," says Alison. "It was my life. Alison searches his face to see if he understands her.

"We will have to hire someone to take care of this pool spa tub I ordered," says Frank.

"I always feel like I'm playing a game of darts with you when I prepare to do something to help myself," says Alison.

"It feels like this is some guilt trip," says Frank.

"Your doctor told me, after careful review of your charts with other surgeons, you may never walk again," says Frank.

"You seem to like that I can only work for you," says Alison. I want to work on myself too. Wait, you like the fact that I brought in my investors so you can keep them for yourself," says Alison.

###

Alison wakes up after she heard Frank move in silence about the bedroom. He wants her to stay in bed to wait for the caregivers to come. Her eyes are wide open as she watches him dress.

"Good morning, Frank, says Alison."

"Good morning, Alison", says Frank. "I didn't mean to awaken you. You should stay in bed until the caregivers arrive." He straightens his red tie as she sits up in bed.

"I had high hopes of moral support from you today," says Alison.

She gives Frank the look of disappointment. He talks to her with his back turned. She's been with him long enough to know his body language.

"Why didn't you try to reach for me last night?" asks Alison.

"I'm learning to walk again but I still know how to make love."

Frank moves to give her a sensual kiss to avoid the conversation.

"I'm not going to break into a million pieces if you make love to me," says Alison.

She snatches his tie off. He rips the buttons of his shirt open. He snatches his t-shirt off. "Is there anything else you want from me, princess Alison?" asks Frank. Alison flinches away from him in dismay.

"I'm not going in today so that I can spend the day catering to you and only you."

Frank snatches his cellphone off the charger. Alison begins to cry. She sobs, drools, and scrapes her nails into the sheets to make a fist, her nails dig into her palms.

"I hate this marriage and I hate my life," says Alison.

Frank calms his breaths. He sits down on the bed next to Alison.

"I'm so sorry sweetheart, I let pressure build, I shouldn't have," says Frank. I know all of this has been hard on you." Alison embarrassed by her action; she can't look Frank in the eyes. She uses the sheet to hide her face.

"I'm a new wife who had big plans to be married forever," says Alison. I don't think you understand what my accident has done to what I envisioned our marriage would be like."

"I try Alison," says Frank. "We both didn't expect this to happen on our wedding day." "When the officiant said for better or for worse, I knew what my duty was as a husband."

"Your duty?" asks Alison. "Now, I'm an obligation to you?" asks Alison. Is that why you refrain from making love to me anymore? asks Alison.

"I didn't mean it like that, Alison," says Frank. I don't want you to not be able to withhold helping -- I meant -- "

"Helping you with *your* company," finishes Alison. Frank can't escape the letdown fast enough as he searches for a better excuse in his mind.

"I want to go back home to my parents, Frank." Alison glares into Frank, he looks away.

"We got married too soon and for the wrong reasons," says Alison.

“I’m sorry you feel that way, Alison,” says Frank. Frank not too sincere.

“Is there anything that I can do to make it all up to you?” asks Frank.

“No, I’m afraid not,” says Alison.

“I suppose one year was not long enough to realize for better or worse,” says Frank. This house. My business will take a hit.” Alison curls into the fetal position.

“Frank, I don’t want anything from you,” says Alison. I will call my family lawyer.” Alison turns away from Frank as he walks out of the bedroom.

"This is not love, you need your mother," says Alison.

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