

Short Story: The Timetable

Level A2-B1

"I'll do it," I said and he smiled.

"You're very brave Hilda," he said. "Everything will be all right. Don't worry. I'll call you as soon as I reach the airport. I have to go now. My plane leaves in two hours' time. I'm flying to Johannesburg first."

He planted a lingering kiss on her forehead and then headed towards his car. She waved him goodbye and entered the house. *AnaBanda* was waiting for her in the kitchen.

"Madam, I'm going to the market to buy some vegetables and meat for tonight's meal," she said in her endearing singsong voice. "I'll be back before five."

"All right, thank you for letting me know. You can also buy some bread and butter. I will cook some rice while you are away."

"OK Madam," she said. "See you later."

"See you."

Hilda drank a glass of water and braced herself for the next action. She was finally going to see the surprise that Mike had supposedly left for her. It was not a present, he'd insisted. It was more than that. It was something that she would remember as long as she lived. It was a token of love.

"You'll hate it the first time you see it but you'll learn to love it. After some time, you'll never let it go." Well, as you can imagine, she had not known how to react to this news. It wasn't Mike's style to be so enigmatic.

"What is it?" she asked him one more time.

"A timetable."

"A timetable?"

"A timetable. It will help you to take care of yourself. Just spend some time with it."

She saw it as soon as she stepped into the dining room. There was also a cute notebook lying next to it. As she got nearer, she could make out some pens, markers, a ruler and a pencil. Many ideas rushed into her head. What was she supposed to do with all that?

First of all, the timetable wasn't a proper one. It was blank on top of it! She didn't have time to play with colourful pens and pencils like a child. She had better things to do!

"I'll have nothing to do with this," her inner voice bellowed loudly in her head. "I'm reading a book this evening as I initially planned. Why should I be fiddling with a silly piece of paper when I can make better use of my time? The best remedies for life's woes are the ones we discover through personal experience," she told herself firmly.

She made for the living-room but found herself thinking about Mike's surprise. Perhaps there was something more to this 'token of love' than could meet the eye? She simply could not focus on her book.

After sometime of fidgeting and tossing, she went back to the dining room. She sat down on the nearest chair and picked up the little notebook.

She wrote a heading on the first page. Soon, words started to flow freely from her pen.

WHAT'S HAPPENING THIS WEEK?

1) Schedule

- This week, I have a day shift. Work starts at eight and ends at three.
- I have an appointment with the dentist on Friday at five p.m.
- The next basketball training session is on Saturday.

2) Special Arrangements or Plans

- I am seeing Josephine at her place after work on Tuesday. She has invited me for dinner. I am actually looking forward to seeing her.
- I'm welcoming Mike at the airport on Sunday. I can't wait to see him!

3) My Intentions

- I am going to take good care of myself.
- I am not going to read books that are not interesting. I will insist on quality and not quantity.
- I am going to go out for evening walks after work.

It did not take her long to write the above sentences. She then took out the blank timetable and filled it in with all the compulsory events on her schedule. As an afterthought, she'd decided that she would

complete the same timetable with the rest of her tasks only after she'd done them. This would help to motivate her.

Her week went as planned. She used the timetable as a guideline and found out that she was not wasting time as she would have done without this precious tool. What would Mike think of all the things she'd been able to do for herself and for others in that short period of time? Surely, he would be impressed!

Soon it was time to meet him at the airport. He looked very happy when she set her eyes on him.

"How was your week darling?" he said, planting a long kiss on her forehead.

"Wonderful," she said. "And productive." She added. "I missed you."

"He smiled knowingly and took her hands into his.

"I missed you too. I'm glad I'm back home."

"Let's go," they said in unison and laughed their hearts out at this coincidence, heading towards the exit.

"This year will be wonderful, he said when they'd stopped laughing. "I promise you, this year will be a great one. We'll have one hell of a good time!"

"We will," I said. "We'll surely have one hell of a good time! I promise you too."



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