

THE NIGHT BILLIE JEAN SAVED MY LIFE!

A Short Story

BY

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The Story you are about to be told is true, except for the parts that are not!

Before the world went dark, life was good.

I had just finished making sure my “best friend” got home safely... We’ll get to why “My best friend” is in inverted commas soon... But as I was saying... I had just finished walking my best friend home after seeing a Nicholas Sparks’ movie at the cinema, her choice by the way, not that I minded. I’m not ashamed to say, that after seeing quite a few of them; I’ve become quite partial to his movies. I’m not even ashamed to admit I have a copy of *The Notebook* and *A Walk to Remember* on DVD and in hardback. But to get back on point...

I was walking down a deserted road. The only source of light came from lamp posts, planted sporadically to illuminate the fields; which spread out on either side of the road. I walked down the road going over the events of the evening in my mind, oblivious to my surroundings. After all, I had walked up and down this road many times in the ten years since Nina and I had been “best friends” and nothing had happened to me before.

As I walked down the deserted and dimly lit road, I should not have been thinking about the film I had just seen, the food I had just eaten, or how much I liked spending time with Nina, even if she did have a boyfriend. What should have been going through my head, instead of how amazingly cool this girl was, should have been that guy’s voice. You all know the one, the narrator from *Crime Watch*...

‘It was a cool summer night; at about ten-thirty in the evening as Martin Joseph walked down a deserted road lit only by a few lamp-posts...’

That’s right, we all know that voice. If I hadn’t been thinking of Nina I would have most likely heard the car approaching from behind, the car door opened, someone getting out and making their way over to me. However, I was having such a good time reliving the night in my head that I didn’t hear any of it until the blunt instrument connected with the back of my head and the world went dark.

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When I came to, I gasped in panic as I realised that I was blindfolded with a black scarf or garment of some kind. The garment was tied so tightly around my eyes that I wasn’t even able to open my eyelids. My hands were bound with a zip tie and we were moving along at a steady speed.

‘You have the wrong person,’ I said as I recovered from the shock of what was happening to me. ‘I’m neither rich nor famous; you must have mistaken me for someone else!’ I added as I was met with silence. As we drove on, I began to get the feeling that we weren’t in London anymore. I didn’t hear the lively sounds of people standing outside pubs or clubs or talking merrily as they waited in the queue to gain entry to them. Or the happy banter as people stood around in twos or threes as they smoked cigarettes. Of course, I didn’t know this for sure, but the fact that I hadn’t heard the usual Friday night commotion or even the sound of another car for some time was unsettling and began to scare the hell out of me. I began to panic, saying the first thing that came into my mind...

‘You won’t get away with this!’ I haven’t been right many times in my life but if I was going to die, I wanted to have the satisfaction of having said something true. Cliché maybe, but true. Still, he said nothing. I was beginning to get annoyed, so I said more roughly than I should have...

‘My family will know something is wrong, and they’ll come looking for me.’ I must confess this was a lie. I have three sisters and an older brother. However, the gasman has visited me more times than any of my siblings, but I had to try something. I was met with more silence and slumped my head back against the headrest. I lifted my head again a few moments later.

‘Don’t I at least get a phone call?’ I asked. Suddenly, my Kidnapper let out a hideous high-pitched laugh.

‘This isn’t a prison. It’s a kidnapping. In prison, you have rights; here you have none.’ He scoffed in-between bouts of laughter.

‘Is a phone call too much to ask for?’

‘One call? Tell me, if I was willing to grant your wish of one call, who would you call?’

‘My best friend,’ I said swallowing, as I pushed down the lump that had risen in my throat.

‘Not your mother or your father or your brothers or your sisters?’ He asked dead-panned

‘No,’ I said, automatically shaking my head.

‘This must be some friend? What is he like a brother from another mother? The bigger brother you never had? Or was your father a real wanker and this guy has taken his place or something?’

‘It’s not a he, it’s a she.’ I said, tasting the warm salty tears that had run down my cheeks and entered my mouth as I spoke.

‘What?!’ He blurted out.

‘My best friend, Nina. If I could speak to anyone before I died, it would be her.’ I said.

‘Your best friend is a girl?’ He asked laughing even harder.

‘Yes.’ I said beginning to get annoyed

‘Bullshit!’ He replied.

‘What do you mean?’ I asked confused.

‘Guys and girls can’t be best friends, so I’ll repeat- Bullshit.’

‘Well, we can. We spend all our time together; we go to the movies and hang out with each other. We take long walks and talk on the phone... So yeah, I would call her my best friend.’ I said defensively.

‘Oh I’m sorry, sure, guys and girls can be best friends if one of three things are in play; One, the guy is gay or two, the girl is a minger or three, she is comfortable knowing that even though you have no chance; giving half the chance you would ride her silly. My kidnapper replied, his voice dripping with sarcasm.

‘Well, one I’m not gay-’ I began.

‘Then she’s a minger.’ He said cutting me off in mid-sentence.

‘She is no minger! Nina is the most beautiful woman I know.’ I said as calmly as I could. And further more I don’t like the way you are referring to my friend as being ridden.

‘Friend huh?’ He said as though he wanted to laugh again, ‘So tell me, while you are sitting in that darkened auditorium watching that movie, are your eyes glued to the screen or do they keep veering off to the side looking at her hand because you so badly want to slip your fingers in-between hers and never let go?’ I didn’t answer, so he went on. ‘When you have finished hanging out or taking a long walk; when you are about to go your separate ways and she offers you her cheek, does your heart sink in disappointment because you so badly wish for her rosy red lips because and you know deep down you’ll always be stuck in the friend zone and never be in the end zone?’

He laughed heartily into the silence when I gave no reply. If there is one thing I hate more than a kidnapper, it’s a kidnapper who is right.

Suddenly, another thought occurred to me. One, which to me was just as worse than not being able to see or speak to Nina again. The thought that I would never hear Billie Jean again hit me like a sledgehammer to the gut. I have listened to that song nearly every day since I was two. If only for a moment, the hurting sensation of being hit by a sledgehammer was replaced by that of the burning sensation to get the hell out of this car by any means possible.

I began twisting and turning my hands as much as I could to try and loosen the zip ties around my wrists. I have never worn a pair of handcuffs but I realised at that moment why police officers sometimes use zip ties instead of handcuffs; they have absolutely no movement in them whatsoever.

Suddenly, without warning, a fresh set of tears began to form and stream down my cheeks like a waterfall; it was not like the two tears that fell not so long before. Niagara Falls had nothing on me at that moment. With the thought, I was about to lose the two most important things ever. There was only one thing left to do... Beg.

‘Please, mister, you have to let me go; I’m too young to die.’

‘People younger than you die every day,’ He shot back angrily.

That’s when real fear kicked in. I realised why I was sitting there and not some rich guy’s kid. He wasn’t a man on a mission to be rich. I doubted he wanted cash. He was a man who wanted revenge; for his child dying of cancer or something. You see this in movies all the time. However, in case I was wrong...

‘Please, sir! I don’t have much money but if you will let me go, I can go to an ATM and give you everything I have,’ I tried reasoning.

‘Do you think I’m an idiot? Wherever there’s an ATM there are people and cameras,’ he replied and I couldn’t argue with that.

As it went silent again, I started to recall the opening cords to Billie Jean in my head and began to sing. I didn’t get far when he screamed at me to stop.

‘Would you just shut up? Oh, God! Just shut it!’

Not wanting to make matters worse, I followed his command and kept quiet. Minutes went by with pure silence. Then, I heard the bleep of a device of some sort: then a beep, beep, beep, beep, and beep. Then, suddenly to my surprise, it was like he was giving me my dying wish or something because the intro to Michael Jackson’s Billie Jean filled the car. I couldn’t believe it! If this guy wasn’t an evil son of a bitch, we could have been friends. I thought to myself... if I’m going to die, at least I’m going to die happy.

Suddenly, I was no longer in the back of my kidnapper’s car being driven to a place unknown deep in a woodland or deserted hideout of some sort. I willed myself back to 1983 and was now sitting in the front row of Pasadena Civic Auditorium, California. I watched as Michael Jackson donned his spy hat and began hip-thrusting his way through his performance of Billie Jean for the first time. I watched as he moved effortlessly across the stage. I clapped along in time with the music as he danced his way through the song. As Michael began to glide backwards doing the moonwalk, I roared and applauded in approval. As he spun around like a tornado and stood on his toes, I jumped up and applauded as though I too was seeing it for the first time; I stayed standing and clapped along with the rest of the audience.

As the song faded to a close, the audience roared and applauded louder still. I took my seat and looked to my right and who was there sitting beside me? Nina! She sat there, smiling. I rested my hand on the armrest, she slipped her hand over mine, interlocking our fingers. As she smiled at me, I moved in for the kill; our lips were inches apart when suddenly the dream was ruined as the intro to Billie Jean started up again.

The second helping of the song was bittersweet. My kidnapper may have been allowing me to hear it again while at the same time robbing me of the greatest daydream I have ever conjured! (Well, second-most amazing daydream. But we won't go into that).

Anyway, when my kidnapper started the song again for the third time, I thought this guy must be a bigger fan of M.J than I was... However, Michael only sang the first few lines of the first verse. The bit I had sung before my kidnapper screamed at me to stop before I heard a beep, and the song began again. Once again, the guy played the song up to the point where he had screamed at me and told me to stop singing. Then, he began the song again. When it got to the point where he told me to shut up, I jumped in fright as I heard three loud bangs on what I assumed was the steering wheel. I jumped again when he screamed...

'It won't go away! It just won't go away!' he raged, banging his hand against what once again I assumed was the steering wheel.

A few moments later, I felt the car turning off the road we were on. Suddenly, the car picked up speed and then came to a screeching halt. I screamed out in fright as I was flung forward and smashed my face into the headrest in front of me. A moment later, I heard the driver's door open, and that pinging sound which indicates to the driver that the door is opened began ringing in my ears. Over the sounds of the door alarm, I heard the sound of crunching gravel, then, the clack of the door handle nearest to me being pulled on.

Suddenly, I was dragged from the car. There was complete silence. I was so scared that I heard nothing after that, not the creaking of crickets or the hoot of an owl. I didn't even hear the annoying sound of the door alarm ringing anymore because my mind was so focused on death. However, I wasn't going out like the usual sad sacks though... You know the ones that beg for mercy as tears run down their cheeks and snot slowly slides from their nose down towards their upper lip. Me! Do that? Never?! Well, I mean I did as you've just read but let us pretend I didn't.

Because now I knew that the end was near, I was going to approach this like a man. However, not before I had one last moment with the people I loved. So, once again, I took myself to a happy place.

Nina and I were at her place, listening to music. No prizes for guessing what music we were listening to. Nine times out of ten, Nina may have always chosen the movie we saw but like any good relationship, nine times out of ten, I chose the music. We sat on her sofa talking when she inclined her head towards mine. Just as her lips began to brush against mine... I feel an explosion of pain run through my body as my kidnapper's foot connected with my ribs.

'Just one kiss, even if it is imaginary!' I screamed out in agony. Suddenly, I heard his footsteps walking away from me. Then I heard the slamming of one car door and then another.

'Don't you ever do that again! Insulting a musical God like that? You're lucky it wasn't Stevie Wonder!' He shouted out at me. 'And one more thing! Stop being a wimp and tell Nina how you feel, he said in a much calmer tone. Then, I heard the sound of the engine start, followed by the sound of tyres screeching against tar and gravel as he sped off down the road.

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To this day, I still don't know why he kidnapped me or why he let me go. I often wonder why he did both. Was it revenge for his sick kid or grandma or was I a practice run for something bigger? Maybe I was practice for what he might do when he kidnaps a millionaire's daughter or the Prime Minister's son? But what bugged me is for the life of me, I couldn't figure out why he gave me that warning before he sped off?

Well, that was until very recently, a couple of months ago I entered a talent contest, it was a dance and sing like Michael Jackson contest! The dancing part went well. I performed Wanna Be Startin' Somethin' and got a standing ovation. The singing didn't go so well, not well at all! Before I even finished the first verse of Man In the Mirror, the audience was doubling over in fits of laughter and booing me off the stage. Luckily, no one had tomatoes with them or I'd have been covered in slime. Some of them looked so angry that they could have thrown their loose coins, but why waste hard-earned pennies? So I came to the conclusion that it was my singing, as terrible as it was, that came in handy that night. Billie Jean saved my life! That poor guy, I really have ruined a classic for him but then again it serves him right for trying to kidnap yours truly.

Some people say that love is putting up with other people's shit, even though you don't have to. And I would like to say that was the case for Nina putting up with my god-awful singing because I used to sing all the time around her and she never complained. However, this can't be said because I took that stupid guy's advice and told her how I really felt. Now, I'm searching for a new best mate.

THE END