

SAMPLE PROOFREAD

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Stacey

said a prayer of thanks as I watched the garage door roll down in front of me. I was so happy that my evening out was over and the date from hell had officially ended.

As I stepped out of the garage and into the foyer of my cozy three bedroom house, my daughter, Brianna, came rushing out of the kitchen to greet me.

Our little dog, Marco, an excitable package of frenzy disguised as a white toy poodle, was right on her heels, yelping away in excitement.

Cell phone still perched next to her ear, she breathlessly asked above Marco's racket, "So how was it, Mom? How was your date?"

Standing four inches taller than me, putting her at five feet six inches tall, my daughter is a 16-year-old high school junior that is a bundle of energy and enthusiasm who never failed to put a smile on

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my face. She has a light pecan brown complexion, an athletic build from years of dance, and a frizzy afro which was currently wrapped in a head scarf in preparation for her going to bed for the night. Even though I was reluctant to talk about my evening, I appreciated her eagerness right about now because I definitely needed it to recover from my date from Hell.

"It was an experience," I said, responding to her query.

I looked down at what used to be my favorite black cashmere sweater and took in the small white flakes that covered the front of the garment.

Following my eyes, Brianna asked, "What's all that on your sweater?"

"You don't even want to know," I said, leaning wearily against the living room wall.

"I do, Mom. Come on! Tell me, please," she said.

"Have you done your homework? Cleaned up the kitchen?" I asked, desperately trying to distract her. Right about now, the only thing that I wanted to do was to get out of my clothes and into bed.

"Yes, ma'am," she responded, a small smile playing on the corners of her mouth. I knew that it was over once I saw that look on her face. I tried another tactic hoping that would delay the inevitable.

"Aren't you on the phone?" I asked weakly, running out of cards to play in my effort to throw her off the scent.

"Oh!" she said with a yelp of surprise as she looked at the phone in her hand as if it had just suddenly appeared there. "I forgot I was even on it."

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She turned her back to me and whispered into the phone. She ended the call and turned back to face me with a nauseatingly goofy grin on her face.

I shook my head at her and headed towards the couch, Marco bouncing around my ankles with each step.

“So, Mom, tell me all about it,” she said as she followed me into the living room and plopped on the loveseat across from me. Marco followed her lead and hopped up on to the cushion next to her and propped his head in her lap.

“Okay, okay.” I sighed as I kicked off my shoes. “Hold on.” I stood up, pulled my cell phone out of my purse, and walked into the kitchen.

For me to be able to relive the past few hours, I was going to need something to relax me. Just thinking about the evening made me shudder.

I reached up into the cabinet, got out a wine glass, and poured myself a glass from the bottle of Apothic Red that I had opened the night before. I called my best girlfriend, Angel Troyer.

I smiled wryly to myself when I thought about Angel’s name.

Her mother must have known what she had on her hands when she gave birth to Angel to saddle her with that name. My best friend looked like an angel, but she truly had some devilish ways. Tonight for instance, when she set me up on my disaster date the way that she had, was the latest example.

“Hello,” Angel said as she answered the phone.

“Heffa!” I responded. “I was getting ready to tell Brianna about my night, so I figured I might as well tell you at the same time.”

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I pushed the button which activated the speakerphone feature, and the sound of Angel's high-pitched laugh filled the space.

I shook my head as I walked into the living room and sat down on the couch next to Brianna. I took a sip of wine and began telling them about my date from Hell.

"Well, I knew it was going to be one of those nights the minute I laid eyes on him. He had an afro that would've made Jimi Hendrix proud." I exclaimed, leaning back against the couch's headrest.

Brianna's laughter mixed with Angel's as they both cracked up. I closed my eyes and took another sip of wine.

I'm going to need a few more refills, I thought as I eyed the bottle sitting on the kitchen counter.

"Anyway," I continued. "This dude was old enough to be Brianna's grandfather. Hell, he was old enough to be my grandfather! He had on a bright purple polyester suit with a loud floral print shirt unbuttoned damn near down to his belly button. He was proudly showing off all his taco meat chest hair and fake gold chains. And you know he had the matching purple fedora tilted to the side."

At this point, the tears were streaming down Brianna's face as she fell over laughing on the love seat. Angel was hyperventilating with laughter over the speakerphone.

I took another sip of wine and continued. "Just how Pimp-Daddy-Superfly kept the hat on the 'fro was a miracle in and of itself. At this point, all I could think about was where I was going to bury your body after I finished strangling you the next time I saw you, Angel. I couldn't believe you set me up on a blind date with this joker. I thought me and you were friends, and then you turn around and do this mess to me. Ooh, I was too heated at you."

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Angel was laughing so hard that she couldn't even respond.

I glared at the phone for a few seconds and then continued, "Anyway, I kept my game face on and tried to hang in there. I figured I might as well get dinner out of the deal. Well as it turned out, I got two dinners instead of one. This fool was talking with his mouth full and kept spitting food out his damned mouth all night. There was more of his food on my plate than what I had ordered for myself. Look at this mess," I said as I pointed to the spots on my ruined sweater.

"Each of these spots is a battle scar from where I was hit with food shrapnel. He was tossing food grenades like we were on a battlefield in Iraq somewhere. I felt like putting on a helmet and yelling, 'INCOMING!' because there were so many food bombs raining down on me!"

Brianna was rolling on the couch laughing. The tears were streaming down her cheeks as she lay back on the couch cracking up.

I looked at her and shook my head, listening to them laughing at my night of horror.

"I'm so glad you two are able to find humor in my discomfort," I said in mock anger. Their laughter was becoming contagious and I feigned anger as I tried to continue to fuss at them.

"Here I am taking one for the team with 'Seventies Sam' and y'all are just laughing at me. No kind of sympathy or anything."

"No, Mom," Brianna said in between short breaths. "It's not like that at all. I could just see the look on your face as you tried to eat." She wiped the tears from her eyes.

"Eat!" I yelled out. "There's no way I could've eaten anything while I was acting like Money Mayweather out there. I was bobbing

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and weaving all damn night trying to avoid getting hit in the face with flying food.”

Angel screamed with laughter at my comment.

“Stop, Mom!” Brianna shrieked, her face turning purple with laughter.

“Anyway, little girl,” I said, smiling at her as I drained my glass. “This is just too painful for me to continue. Isn’t it past your bedtime?”

“Yes, ma’am”, she said with a huge grin on her face. “But I want you to tell me how the rest of the date went tomorrow, okay?”

She gathered her school books off the coffee table and headed up the stairs towards her bedroom.

Picking up my phone, I canceled the speakerphone and put it to my ear to continue talking to Angel. She was still laughing, so I gave her a few more moments to compose herself. I glanced at the clock on the stove and saw that it was almost ten. This was the first good thing for me this evening. I still had enough time to get plenty of rest so that I could meet with my client in the morning.

After my traumatic evening, I guess my concept of time—hell, reality for that matter—was thrown off.

“You finished laughing over there?” I asked sarcastically, interrupting her.

“Yes, girl. I’m good.”

“Glad to hear that. So why didn’t you tell me about this guy? You could have given me some kind of warning.”

“Girl, I know. I’m sorry about that,” she said.

“How could you set me up for the okie-doke like that? You said he was mature. You said that he was tall. You said he was a great

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conversationalist. What you didn't say was that he was a senior citizen. What you didn't say was that he was four feet tall with a twelve inch afro. What you didn't say was that his conversation revolved around his arthritis, his grandkids, and his suits."

"Girl," she said, sounding like she was trying not to start laughing again. "I'm sorry that I had to do that to you, but I had to."

"You had to?" I exclaimed. "Are you serious? What do you mean you had to?"

"Stacey, he's my boss' older brother who just came in to town," she offered as an explanation. "My boss wanted me to set him up with one of my single friends who could show him around. You were the first person that came to mind. I needed someone who had a good personality and who could handle herself in any situation. Honestly, I really didn't know too much about him. I just know that if I'd told you what I knew about him, you wouldn't have accepted the invitation."

"You're damn right on that one," I spat.

"See, that's what I'm talking about right there," she said.

"Whatever. I'm getting ready to go to bed," I said. "I'm going to take a shower and wash this food off me. Then I'm going to try to go to sleep and hopefully not have any nightmares about tonight. I've got a showing tomorrow and Lord knows I need some rest after tonight. Just know that you owe me one, girl."

"I know," she said. "I'll make it up to you. I Promise. Thank you for doing this for me."

"Mmm hmm," I said and hung up the phone.

After taking a long, hot shower, I lay in my bed surrounded

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by my thousands of pillows, looking at the ceiling. I reflected on the new low that my life had sunk to. This was the first real date that I had in a few weeks and it turned out to be a huge disaster.

I knew that Angel meant well and she could have in no way envisioned the type of evening that I ended up having. The fact that I was the first person on her list of single women bothered me.

I was tired of the game, tired of the knuckleheads that seemed to cross my path in the crazy dating scene of metro Atlanta. I knew there were some good brothers out there but I just could not seem to find them. Instead, I get paired up with their pimperish grandfathers.

I shook my head at the idea and drifted off to sleep.

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