


Tekst 8

De volgende tekst is het begin van het verhaal Security, geschreven door Yvette Edwards.

- 1 Merle noticed the security guard the moment she stepped through the entrance of Penny World: a tall, heavy-set white man, mid-forties, who had positioned himself on top of a barstool at the front of the store to have an unobstructed view of customers entering; and she knew he'd clocked her, because he stood up straightaway, trying to make the action seem natural by generally surveying the store, as if that had been his intention all along, and it surprised her, the anger she felt – hot and rapid, erupting inside her chest like a volcano come to life – surprised her at a time when she was upset with so many other things, proper problems with longevity attached, that this incident, when she'd just popped out to pick up some Sure deodorant and a roll of clingfilm, was the blow that finally swept her over the edge.
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- 2 Her flight was tomorrow morning at 11 and arrangements had been made to pick her up at 5 a.m. so she didn't miss it. She'd bought the suitcase last week, had to, because the only one she'd ever owned was the one she'd brought with her when she made the six-week boat journey from Jamaica to England in June 1964, which had for years been reclining on top of her wardrobe, the metal handle broken, clasps defunct, reduced in status to a storage container, nothing more. She'd not been back to Jamaica since arriving here, had never gone on holiday abroad, never had need of a passport, and here she was, at the age of seventy-eight, making the journey back with a suitcase from Cheap Cheaper Cheapest that had a zip that kept catching when she tried to close it, and brittle wheels that clattered noisily behind her, after she'd paid for it and hauled the brand-new empty thing home.
 - 3 She'd packed – probably overpacked – it, and it sat open on her bed, just waiting for the Sure deodorant to be put inside. Once she'd done that and wrestled again with the dodgy zip, the clingfilm would be wrapped around the suitcase to give her the greatest chance of making it to Kingston, on this, her first journey back, with her dignity and its contents intact. The security guard wore a dark clean-pressed uniform and a flat black army cap pulled so low on his head, it almost touched the thin-rimmed frame of his large mirrored glasses, and he had the restless air of the American coppers Merle had seen in Hollywood action movies, lounging on the bonnet of a police car, impatient to use their gun. Ordinarily, she would've picked up a basket to put her goods in as she walked around, held the basket high and visible, would've kept it on the opposite side of her body to her handbag, in the hope of conveying the fact that she was an honest person who'd

never shoplifted a thing in her life; but today her anger prevented her doing that. A voice in her head whispered a sentence she was too polite to dream of saying aloud, but it so perfectly synchronized with her mood, she nearly smiled: *Let him kiss out me backside.*

- 4 She knew the deodorants were shelved on Aisle 4, and the clingfilm on Aisle 5. The most direct route was to cut across the front corridor between the tills and the aisles, but she decided against that. Instead, she began walking the length of Aisle 1, stopping in front of shelves filled with nuts and dried fruit, stealing furtive glances upwards in the direction of the store camera fixed to the ceiling, in a manner she hoped looked very suspicious. She picked up some pistachios, examined the package, turning it over as though reading the information on the back, even though what was written there was in another language. She didn't check in the direction she had just come, didn't need to, because she knew the security guard had followed her. She felt him the same way she had felt him watching and following her around on previous visits. She peered up again at the camera, then away, put the packet back on the shelf, and carried on walking.
- 5 Seventy-eight years of age, and with the neat and tidy way she always dressed and carried herself, were she a stranger trying to work out what kind of person she might be, the word that would have come to mind is church. Despite this, in the fifty-four years she'd been living in England and spending her money in shops with security guards, she'd regularly been followed around like a thief.

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