High Resolutions

A Short Story for the New Year’s Resolution Story Contest

By Maryanne Peters

Jason Hatch had decided to sell the family business prior to Christmas 2022. To call it “the Family Business” had almost become a lie. His brother and sister had asked him to buy them out soon after their father had died. Jason’s own children showed no interest in the business which he would happily have handed on as his grandfather had placed it in the care of his father, and his father had delivered it to his children. But now only the name connected it to the family – Hatch Precision Lenses.

He had a good price from a competitor, and he trusted it because this buyer was not the only one. But this buyer could see the strategic value, perhaps because Jason had pointed it out. It was a case of acquiring capacity and dominance in the market in three states, giving the key to more growth. All that was needed to point out a plan that Jason said he was too old to pursue, and suddenly the value doubled.

Not that Jason Hatch was that old. He was only 53. He had married young to his high school sweetheart, and with the stability that the family business offered they could buy a home and fill it with children. There was Matthew, Virginia and Tyler, all good children – just not interested in precision lenses. Sadly, his wife had died in 2019 – a car accident. Jason had coped well by throwing himself into the business. The 3 years of the 2020s had proved the best ever for Hatch Precision Lenses.

But for Christmas 2022 Jason Hatch felt that it was a time for giving. All of his children would receive the biggest Christmas gift that they were ever likely to receive. All he had to do was to make sure that they were ready to spend Christmas with their father.

“Actually, we had planned to spend Christmas with the kids’ other grandparents this Christmas, Dad,” said Matt. “They have all those cousins on their mothers’ side of the family, so it will be a real Christmas, if you know what I mean.”

“I don’t believe in Christmas, as you know, Daddy,” said Ginny. “I was going up to a mountain retreat with some friends, just to meditate and stuff. I am sure you will understand.”

“I hate the cold Pa,” said Tyler. “The surf is great down in Baja this time of year. I loved Christmas as a kid, but I am 20 years old. It’s not for me.”

“Well let me explain why this is the one Christmas that you spend with me, and for some of you it may well be the last Christmas you do,” he explained to each of them over the phone. “I am selling the business and I am proposing to make an early distribution to the members of my family who will be sharing Christmas dinner with me and seeing in the New year with me as well.”

It seems that plans can change when money is mentioned, and for the first time in a while, the large Hatch home was fully occupied with Matt and his wife in the guest room and Matt’s children sharing his old room. Jason had bought a tree and decorated it, and on his own cooked a large 4 course meal for the whole family for Christmas day.

“I am working on my cooking skills,” he said to them. “In fact I am developing a whole range of domestic skills as a part of my New Year’s Resolution. That and the fact that very soon I will have no business to think about and time to do other things – very different things.”

“How much money are you planning to hand over to us?” said Tyler, who could be direct to the point of being rudely blunt.

“Let’s say that it is more than $1 million dollars each, but the reason that I am asking that we reconvene for New Years eve is because I am going to be asking all of you to make a New Year’s resolution after midnight on that night, because that is what I will be doing. What I want is to agree in advance that every one of us will support the resolutions of all other members of this family, no matter what, and there will be another distribution at the beginning of 2024.

“You’ll support anything I want to do?” Matt asked.

“We all will. That is the deal, if we are all in it,” said Jason, firmly.

“I’m in,” said Ginny, followed by echoes from her brothers.

“I will cook another meal for December 31,” said Jason. “You don’t need to bring the family back if you don’t want to Matt. For this exercise what matters most to me is that the four of us are together and that our pact is honored.”

“It will be four resolutions just like the motto of the company,” said Matt – “High Resolution Resolved”.

“Exactly,” said Jason. “Four high resolutions”.

And a week later they all returned for that second dinner, just the four of them.

Two bottles of champagne were opened before midnight and finished soon after the New Year was seen in from the living room in front of the open fire.

“The time has come for high resolutions,” said Jason. “Who wants to be first?”

“I will do it Daddy,” said Ginny. “I know that you have not always approved of my choices in life, and you think that I should have finished college, but I am an artist, Dad. I am not about calculation and knowledge. I am a creative person, or at least I want to be. I have signed up for art school in Paris, Daddy. This is going to be big for me. I need to prove myself as an artist. You will support me in this, won’t you?”

“We all will,” said Jason, looking to his sons for their nods. Matt’s approval seemed hard for him to deliver, but it came.

“I have decided that I want to invest the money in property, Dad,” said Matt. “The truth is that I have been looking at something down in Florida. I am thinking of quitting my job and moving down there and working in real estate. I know you prefer businesses that make stuff, Dad, but property is where the money is.”

“It’s a big move for you and your family, son,” said Jason. “But you have our support. Change your life while you can, that’s what I say.”

“I am not sure if this is a change of life, Dad,” said Tyler. “You might call it more of the same, but the truth is that for all my wanderings, I still don’t believe that I have seen much. I want to take a trip around the whole world, Dad. I want to see what this planet is all about, and then maybe go back to college and build on that media degree. You guys know what you want, but I don’t. I need to find that direction.”

“I suppose there is no guarantee that you will ever find it,” said Jason. “But I think that we should all support Tyler in his search – and some money will certainly help.”

“It’s time for your resolution, Dad,” said Matt.

“Well, I am resolved that in 2023, starting as early as possible, I am going to become a woman,” said Jason.

He let that sink in, looking at the faces of his children in the silence that followed. Shock and confusion can look pretty much the same.

“But what about Mom?” It was Ginny who broke the silence, with a look that seemed to accuse him of betrayal. “How long has this idea been in your head.”

“I told her before we were married,” said Jason dispassionately. “I told her that I would not let it affect our marriage vows and it never did. I was a good husband to her. I was faithful and providing. I was a good father too, I hope. And I took over the family business – I was a good son. All of those are male posts that I held and discharged, but in my heart, I was never male. Then after your mother died I told myself that this was my lot in life, to live as something I was never meant to be. But now I have time and money – we all do.”

“So, you are going to start growing breasts and wearing dresses?” Matt sounded incredulous.

“I have already started to process of transition, and I won’t be putting on a dress until I look right in one,” said Jason. “But I am hoping that will be sooner rather than later. May I remind you all, that I asked in advance for support. Do I have it, or don’t I?”

Again, there was silence.

“Are you going to have your cock chopped off, Dad?” Tyler was smirking. He found the silence uncomfortable. He always did.

Jason ignored the question in responding – “You can keep calling me Dad if you like, but maybe call me Jazz from now on. I am changing my name to Jasmine. But I want to say this, you have made your resolutions and whether I approve of them or not I will support you in achieving them and I will fund them equally. But if there is more money to give, and there will be, it will be given to those who have stuck to their resolution. That is what the idea of a New Year’s Resolution is all about – a commitment to self. I have made mine, based on your promise to support me.”

Jason stopped again, looking for a restatement of that promise.

“Count on me, Dad, I mean Jazz,” said Tyler. “When do I get the money?”

“Before the end of the month,” said Jason. “And more before the end of January 2024 provided that we see in the New Year as we did tonight, one year from now. It may be here or not, but I will host it, and we will assess who has followed their resolution and who has failed to support the others, before I decide who will receive more money.”

“I think you have manipulated us,” said Matt. “You made us promise before we knew what you planned to do to yourself.”

“And I think that you know nothing about property and your move to Florida could well be a disaster, but I promised to help you see it through and I will, because I committed to do that before you told me what your plan was. Who has manipulated whom?” 1784

\*\*\*

Tyler flew in from Morocco to make sure that he got home for Christmas. He had been advised to go around the world “counter-Fogg” – the opposite to the way Phileas Fogg had circumnavigated the globe in the classic novel. You are moving with the rotation of the globe which helps with long distance air travel, although he seldom flew, preferring the view from a train or even a bus.

He arrived at the old house close to dusk having warned that he would be late. He smiled as he walked up the path, to think that a year later they would be back in the same house for Christmas even though his father had sold it the day after he settled the sale of the business and paid them all the money he had promised. It was the last time he had seen his father, but he had been in close contact, so he knew what to expect when he rang the doorbell, something he had never done before.

She opened the door and smiled. She looked fresh from the salon with her hair in soft curls and her makeup perfect, and she was wearing a simple colorful dress and looking completely at ease in it. She simply opened her arms and he fell into her embrace, initially startled by the volume and softness of her bosom. But the hug spoke more than any words.

“I’m sorry, Meena, this is my mom, Jasmine,” said Tyler to the pretty dark-haired lady standing beside him.

“Come and give me a hug, Sweetheart”. Jazz’s words were as soft and sweet as her smile as she took the girl into her arms. “Call me Mom, or call me Jazz whatever you are comfortable with”. She was still holding Tyler’s girl, but looking at her son.

“It’s great to see you, Mom,” said Tyler.

“Come inside both of you. It’s cold and we have so much to talk about.” Jazz ushered them in and took Meena’s bag. “I have heard so much about you, Meena. I am so happy that my youngest has found such a beautiful and successful young woman.”

“The United States will be a fresh start for me, but with Tyler I think we can do well.” Meena’s voice had the tone of a British education, but with the endearing Indian accent. She was beautiful and very intelligent. Jazz immediately approved.

“So you have to explain how we are back here,” said Tyler. “I thought you sold the place for a good price almost a year ago?”

“I did. To Henry Jackman, the man who bought the business. It is so handy to the factory, and it is the biggest in the neighborhood. He wanted it so I sold it to him and after I had spent a month or two on intensive transition I moved down to Florida for a while.”

“How is Matt doing?” asked Tyler, and for Meena’s benefit he added - “That’s my older brother, Matt.”

“He had some problems, but I have supported him as I promised I would, although more than I would have liked. Still, it is secured, and now I think he is going to be alright. Anyway, let me make us some hot tea.”

“So why are we back here?” asked Tyler.

“Well, Henry asked me back to help him with the growth strategy that grounded the price he paid, so I came back as a paid consultant for a few weeks. I think that it is fair to say that he was shocked when I walked through his door, but he quickly realized that I would be helpful, and I think I was that. Anyway, we got to working closely together, burning the midnight oil and such, and well, one thing led to another and a few months ago I moved in at his request. Actually, he basically begged me.”

“So, you are back working in the business?” said Tyler.

“Oh no, he says I am too big a distraction. No, I am a housewife these days. His housewife, although not formally … at least not yet. It is what I have always dreamed of being, and now it’s real. I kept to my resolution. What about you?” Jazz busied herself in the kitchen she new so well, while Tyler and Meena sat at the breakfast bar.

“I went around the world just like I said I would, and I found my direction, and here she is.” Tyler reached out and took Meena’s hand and kissed it.

“How wonderful,” said Jazz. “You look so good together. I can feel the love in the room. I can tell you that when Henry get’s home you will witness that felling going up a notch.”

“What about Ginny,” said Tyler. “How is she doing? Do you see her much?”

“I am seeing a lot of her, but she will not be here until tomorrow, Christmas day. She has a man, Nathan, and will be with his parents tonight. But the great news is that she is pregnant and very happy to be. She says that her quest for creativity can be satisfied at home. I think that she has discovered that others have more talent and that a home can be the only work of art that really matters. She says that she considers me the example of the perfect wife and mother. Imagine that? I am flattered of course, but I am new to this.”

“You have never done things by halves, Mom,” said Tyler, becoming increasingly comfortable with calling her that.

“Has Tyler told you my tale, Meena?” she said to the newest family member.

“He has but I scarcely believe it … Mom.” It seemed inappropriate to call her anything but that

“I have had to put in the effort. I was always keen on cooking and quite house proud, but everything else I have had to learn. I worked for a time in a beauty salon learning all those skills, I took flower arranging course, I have even learned to sew and knit. Imagine that? Deportment is easy after all of that. I like to think that the way I move comes from within – it has always been there.” Jazz poured out some tea – something sweet and with spices in it that Meena recognized from her youth in India, but now clearly a Christmas beverage.

“And Matt, can he leave his property empire for a week?” said Tyler.

“He can because he has learned that he is not the only smart guy in the room and that he is able to delegate. He should be arriving tonight with his wife and kids, but he won’t be staying for New Year unless he wants to. I have already reflected on our resolutions made at the beginning of the year. Have you?”

“Well, I wonder whether there was anything I could have done to give more support to Ginny and Matt who never really cared for what I had to say anyway. But I hope that I have been supportive of you?”

“Darling, you have been,” said Jazz with a smile. “All those positive messages that you sent despite some truly ugly photos of me trying too hard. And your kind words when I came out of surgery. And you only asked me to get you out of trouble twice.”

“Three times,” he said.

“Anyway, you have achieved what you set out to do, and Meena is the proof of that. And the others have too. We all have I think, even Ginny because she has found her purpose. I think that we can all say that those high resolutions were honored and we can all collect the rewards.

Tyler lifted his mug of tea to toast his mother living. “It’s like the company motto - Hatch Precision Lenses - “High Resolutions Resolved”.

“Merry Christmas to that,” said Jazz raising her mug.

The End

3100 words

© Maryanne Peters 2024

Author’s Note: This story is to be submitted in the [2024-01 January - New Year's Resolution Story Contest](https://bigclosetr.us/topshelf/contests/2024-01-january-new-years-resolution-story-contest)