

2. AFTERMATH

With the little sleep that she gets, Cheryl hardly recovers from the night before. She feels as if a concrete weight has been dropped on her. She has to look in the bed next to her to make sure that Donny didn't follow her home last night. When she sees her bed is empty, she quickly thanks her blessings. A couple of years ago, she had no problem balancing these late nights. Here she is feeling the heavy effects crashing down upon her.

Her head is still cloud. She tries to shake out the cobwebs but they are woven deep. A little coffee fortifies her. She pretends that will be enough to sustain her through the day. It's her switch that turns on her automatic pilot. And she plunges into her day. She glues on a smile, and no one can guess that the storm is still raging inside.

Her first client is entirely impressed with her presentation. She offers a reasoned argument how he can protect his portfolio by offsetting his concentration in stocks with investments in bonds and other securities. She also suggests moving part of his stocks to the financial sector. Cheryl offers a convincing argument why some securitization deals are going to prove extremely profitable to the lending companies.

She is amazed with herself. She barely feels that she is in the room, and this being is talking for her. Her own intelligence dazzles her. She has total command of facts and figures. She uses diagrams to show the distribution of his monies. Such control would have seemed impossible from the moment that she dragged herself from bed. And in some ways, it is inconceivable. Someone else is doing this for her. She senses a providential intervention. Her angel is watching over her.

Robert calls about mid morning. He tries to apologize for the night before.

"I had a bad day at work. So I didn't call. I just went to bed after I came home from work."

She wonders if he knows that she went out. She accepts his excuse. It's better than having to feel alone. She doesn't want to cast herself adrift in the uncertainties that pass for nightlife. Sure, she loves to pretend, to play the game. But at her worst moments, Robert is still her shining light.

She and Robert have thought about buying a house together. She is waiting for his proposal. There are vague plans about having kids. She's tied her dreams to his ship. Even at her darkest moments, she recognizes that she can always call him. And then she perks up. She needs him there more as an assumption than as a reality. She doesn't want to think what might happen if she were completely alone.

Sometimes at the Anchor she achieves a clarity. She lives a life that has nothing at all to do with Robert. Under this vision, she recognizes her own independence. She really doesn't need him to give meaning to her life. These thoughts are all part of the weight of the night. But she shines in the brilliance of this artificial light. It's not the alcohol talking as she staggers under the stupor of darkness. She becomes intoxicated with the design for her life. She is wanted. She has her admirers. She doesn't need to submit to some guy who's always in his own world. She doesn't have to give up what makes her unique so that she can be the perfect wife in a broken fairy tale.

It is under that spell that she forges ahead for the rest of the day. After a productive

morning, she decides to take a long lunch and stop by the gym. Her tense muscles reflect the burden of a night of heavy partying. She uses the machines to stretch herself out and cast out any demons that have followed her home from the revelry. The fatigue is slamming her hard and this inspires her work out. The sweat touches her deep inside. She exerts tremendous energy to shake off the fog that has been hanging there all morning. In those physical intensities she again taps her deep well of self-confidence. In the sauna, she can sense the renewal. Any doubts that she may have retained from the day before are long gone. She feel like a new person.

Robert instinctively feels that he has to make up for the night before. At least, that is what she believes. However, he never says anything explicit in his phone conversation. She is just left with that suspicion. So they agree to meet for dinner. She convinces him to meet her at the restaurant. She can tell that Robert has plans to make this an early evening.

He is his impeccable self at the restaurant. She feels a sense of comfort as she is sitting with him. Even after a long day at work, he looks so dapper. He has hardly been wrinkled by his toil. She wants to crack the shell to gain a little sympathy for herself. What can he possibly understand? He'll only attribute her malaise to a rash of vodka cranberries. He can never grasp that need on her part to escape. If only he could be more provocative, if only he could take more of an interest in her, she might not feel the need to head off to oblivion. He just believes that her questions feed themselves. He is just too pragmatic about it all. Or too casual. It's all the same.

What is she thinking.? She is looking for any excuse that she can to get away. He doesn't recognize the opportunity that he has to make up for last night. He doesn't believe that anything happened. He just had work to do. And he became tired. Now he's doing the same thing all over again.

"That was a great meal. I'm stuffed.," he says in a matter of fact tone.

She wants to shake things up, but she just plays along, "Yeah, it was good." The spicy aftertaste reminds her that he is right. She takes a sip from her Drambuie.

"Yeah, I'd love to hang out more. I'll make it up to you on the weekend."

She isn't holding her breath.

This would be the perfect chance to stay in and get her batteries recharged. She's operating on one engine. But she's not going to pack it in. She can already feels the wheels turning. She's out; she's not ready to head back in. She's glad that she brought her own car, Once they separate, she's gets in her car and heads out. It's her therapy. She needs it. He won't suspect a thing. She'll take a lesson from Robert. She'll turn off her phone.

She confesses as much to him. "I'll probably turn off my phone. I had a lot going on at work today, and I do need to recover." Boy does she! She doesn't like tricking Robert. But she won't admit to outright lying. The less he knows, the better.

Trish is waiting for her at the Anchor.

"What happened? I thought that this was the special dinner. His chance to make up for yesterday."

"There was no yesterday for him. It didn't register. It was just another night. Like all the rest.

Trish probes her, "He had to know that something was wrong."

"I wish that I could say that he did know. But he had no idea."

"That's really sad," Trish works to be sympathetic.

Cheryl tries to cover her tracks, "I guess that's why I've always liked him. He's so even keel. Even in a crisis, he keeps his wits."

Trish reacts, "That's not much good if you can't recognize that things are wrong."

"I know what's going on."

Trish changes the subject. She quizzes Cheryl, "What happened to you last night? That guy almost made short work of you while every one was watching."

"It was just an innocent kiss."

"A kiss," Trish doubts her. "He almost did his inside trading while all of us were watching."

"Trish, you should talk. I took a peck on the cheek. But you were really flailing in deep water. You didn't get his number."

Trish answers her, "I got pretty well all I needed."

"And what was that?"

Trish sums it up, "Just a little attention."

"It's that all you were looking for?"

"We're always looking for a little bit more. He just didn't measure up to what I was looking for. It's funny how these home dogs all look so good in the bar light."

For the moment Cheryl wouldn't mind standing in her place. She is so casual about it all. Cheryl is suffering from the night before.

Trish shakes it off. "I'm ready to play right now."

"I don't think this night looks that happening."

"Cheryl, we can make our own action. Listen to the music." Cheryl is bopping in place.

Cheryl is quick to speak, "I could use another drink."

"I'm swearing off drinking. Just water."

Sara's not working tonight. Trish gets a vodka cranberry for Cheryl and a coke for herself.

"It's one quiet night, Trish. I think that it's the rain."

"I think that we need some rain. It's been such a dry summer."

"The rain could clear out all those ghosts running around in our heads."

Trish gets a little more pensive, "Sometimes it works just the other way. After a summer rain, the humidity just hangs in the air."

"And we just feel all weighted down by it."

Trish wonders, "I could use something to eat. Is the kitchen even open?"

"I think that they might have closed it early. You were at the bar. Did you see anyone in there?"

"I really didn't look."

Trish walks over to the bar. She comes back with a bag of chips.

"This was all that I could get." She looks a little down.

Cheryl notes, "It's not much of a dinner."

"It does crunch. That's a good beginning. Want a chip?"

"No, I'm full."

"That leaves more for me," she smiles.

"Is that our entertainment for the night, trying to guess how many chips are in the bag?"

“I’d say the bag is half-full. You want to take a peek inside.”

Cheryl works to maintain the humor, “I already said that I wasn’t hungry.”

Trish notes, “It won’t hurt to look.”

Cheryl smiles, “One look and I’ll want to finish the whole bag.”

“They don’t give you many chips in one of these bags.”

“I’ll buy you another.”

“That’ll make a full meal,” Trish affirms triumphantly.

“Look at us poor girls worrying about how many chips are in a bag.”

There are a couple of empty bags of chips on the table. Both girls bend down to take a peek inside. Then they start laughing uncontrollably. Just when they are about to control their laughter, they take one look at each other, and they start laughing again.

Trish tries to be upbeat, “We’re counting chips tonight. We’ll be counting guys on Friday night.”

“First to kiss, last to screw!”

Trish again is pensive, “I wish that we were like guys and could just reduce our romantic life to little slogans.”

“It’s so easy in the evening, but in the morning it’s serious work.”

Trish comments, “I wish that I could take a pill for the morning after. Then I never would have to say I’m sorry.”

Cheryl has a comeback, “I wish that I could take a pill for the life after.”

“Now we’re getting pretty moody for a dull Thursday night.”

“It could be worse, Trish. We could be drinking with some loser guys.”

Trish sees a silver lining, “That could be tasty entertainment.”

“Instead, we’ve got to deal with some spicy chips.”

“Cheryl, that makes a for quite a spicy evening.”

Cheryl pushes the bags of chips over to Trish’s side of the table. Then she acts as if she is telling a joke, “So these two girls go into a bar.”

“I thought that was my joke.”

“So what’s the punch line, Trish?”

Trish lets her have it, “One leaves with her head, and the other leaves with her heart.”

“You mean neither gets out alive.”

Cheryl muses, “Maybe, I should break up with Robert.”

“And be like me. Then there will be two lonely girls in here.”

Cheryl offers the summary, “We’re back to two girls who walk in a bar.”

Trish makes a face, “All good jokes end where they start off.”

“Maybe we should end where we started off.”

Trish has the best comeback, “How about another drink?”

“I thought that you weren’t playing?”

“There’s no other game in town. Devil make care!”

Cheryl comes back with shots for both of them and two Stellas.

“We’ll just call it an early weekend.”

“Cross off all the appointments in my book.”

“That’s pretty reckless, Trish!”

Cheryl wonders, "I thought that's how you already feel."

"I came here to get my bearings."

Trish is clowning around. She falls to the table as if she is ready to pass out.

"Trish, I guess it's time to leave."

Trish suddenly perks up, "Leave. I'm just getting started."

"You haven't even finished your Stella, and you're already crawling on the ground."

"No, I'm not. I'm raring to go." She jumps up and starts to do a little dance.

"Why don't you do that on the table?"

"I know this is Atlanta, honey. But I'm not a stripper."

Cheryl slaps her on the backside.

"Cheryl, quit that. You're only going to like it."

"We are getting a little desperate."

Trish taunts her, "Speak for yourself. You have Robert, and that still doesn't satisfy you."

Cheryl is defensive, "I don't have much of anything."

"We never do." Trish issues a challenge, "You have to make him propose."

"That could very well be the worst thing that I ever do."

Trish and Cheryl are starting to feel like the victims of their own cruel joke. There's no one there on whom they can work their magic. To drink any more would only remind them of their boredom. Cheryl already spent one day trying to recover from the night before. She doesn't want to continue with the same pattern another day. And there's still the weekend ahead.

She has almost forgot about the flowers from Robert at work. It just seemed so automatic, as if he wanted to patch things up. But he never said anything at dinner about it until she thanked him for the flowers. He didn't even relate it to ignoring her the night before.

At dinner, he talked about maybe doing something together on the weekend. He never committed himself. She wants to hold the weekend for herself. Give it some time to resolve. If he had seemed a little more forthcoming at dinner.

It is starting to get late. The girls could easily decide that this is the best time to duck out. Just give in to preparations for the next day. But this empty moment of the night is the perfect time to encourage reflection. The girls start to discuss the myth of the Southern woman. Cheryl is particularly aware of this influence. Her mother is from old stock in Montgomery. There women agonizingly waited in silence for the inevitable proposal. A girl's role was to prepare herself for this vocation. She would devote all of her effort to fashion the ideal image that would yield under siege to the most adept suitor. In the modern version, these helpless girls anxiously wait to be harvested by clever Northern boys. Despite Cheryl's independence, she can still feel that hold exercised by Robert. Even the coyness of the Anchor girls is only a strategic diversion in what is still a game of flattery and capitulation.

Trish's family has moved to the South from Pennsylvania. So she uses her suburban upbringing to adapt the Southern tradition. It serves well the fear that she is uncritically accepting the role of the independent New York career woman. Both girls realize the paralysis that these misgiving have engendered. Despite the assertiveness on both their parts, they see how easily they have succumbed to that Southern ideal.

"I know how Robert feels that he has me twisted around his little finger."

"It's almost as if you feel this need to push him. He's just seeming more defensive than

usual.”

Cheryl spares no wrath, “He’s being a real dick to me.”

Cheryl knows how hard she’s tried to shed that legacy of the wilting flower. She worked her way through school teaching swimming lessons. Later, she was a waitress at the Anchor. When she transferred to the University of Georgia, she never had time for sorority parties or Bulldog booster rallies. She’d even come home weekends to earn extra money for school. She has always been working to maintain herself. Now, she doesn’t want to give that up.

Trish reminds her of Robert’s pluses, “He’s still a catch.”

Cheryl realizes that it’s not going so well, “He’s dragging me down with him.”

Trish cautions hers, “I don’t think it’s a good time to break up with him. Not until you meet someone else.”

“I’m not going to meet anyone new as long as I’m with him.”

She knows that isn’t completely true. There’s always some guy flirting with her at the Anchor. Even at work, men come on to her all the time. She’s learned to be choosy. That’s all part of her Southern airs.

As a close-knit group, the girls continue to challenge each other. Each accomplishment by one becomes a reference point for the others. A success at work. A new hair style. A dress. Yoga. An exercise program. A new restaurant. They are constantly redefining themselves in relation to each other. They find new bench marks that serve for further motivation.

Even with men, the Anchor girls play the game of one-upping the other. Cheryl’s level-headed quality distinguishes from the others. She has all learned to play her distress so well. Unless she is the center of attention, she makes it seem as if her world is crumbling around her. She has perfected her dramatics. And she seeks to keep extending her audience. Diane’s natural charm and Trish’s persistence bring out the competitive spirit in Cheryl. Even Stevie’s balance only makes Cheryl feel that she must push things further. If there isn’t a train of admirers, then she’s in the dumps.

Robert’s attention is critical to her sense of confidence. She knows that he is on the short path to immense success. He is a jewel in her crown. But his drive means that he can offer only a part of himself to her. She hates to be ignored. The Anchor makes her feel that her audience still awaits a stellar performance.

Even in the empty bar, Cheryl is holding court. Trish adds to this feeling in her desperate defense of Robert.

“If he was here, you could go back to his place when you leave.”

Cheryl admits her weakness, “I could still sneak in his apartment if I wanted. I’m just tired of feeling like a pin cushion for his slightest whims.”

“The way that you’re talking, Cheryl, you’ll break up with him tomorrow.

Cheryl sums it up, “The weekend starts tomorrow. Once he gets off of work, golf will be the main thing on his mind. I won’t even worry about him until Sunday.”

Trish eggs her on, “Feeling sorry for yourself, Cheryl?”

“I’ve got my own fun planned for the weekend. We’re going to get crazy.”

The late night ends up making Cheryl sentimental.

Trish encourages her, “Those are beautiful; diamond earrings.”

“Robert gave them to me.”

Trish plays up her tragic side, “I wish that someone had given me something that nice.”
 “Robert’s not all bad. I don’t know why we fight. He doesn’t even call it fighting. He doesn’t even know it’s happening.”

Trish wonders, “Maybe it’s just your imagination. You’re expecting too much.”

Cheryl gets a little defensive, “He did turn off his phone.”

“He might have been tired.”

“It only takes a second to call and say something nice before he goes to bed.”

“You’ve always pushed yourself so hard. You only assume the same from someone else.”

Trish’s arguments are starting to sink in. Now the night assumes a different form. It reminds Cheryl of her loneliness. The rain and the empty bar speak about her prospects, why she has felt the need to stay with Robert. He can’t be a mind reader. She’s just looking for the opportunity for him to mess up so she can use it against him. An excuse to run to the Anchor.

Now seems like the perfect time to duck out. She has learned her lesson for the night. She has regained her independence. And she still feels a longing for Robert. But it’s not yet time.

Cheryl is staring at the exit and thinking about leaving. Now that she’s got Trish drinking, Trish doesn’t want to hear about any of that. She comes back from the bar with a special concoction from Evan to scare away the blues.

“He said that it will make all the dreariness go away.”

“I wish Robert was this perceptive. What’s it called?” Cheryl asks.

“It’s a “Tropical Knockout”. First it knocks you out, then it carries you off to a distant land.”

Cheryl holds up the drink and looks at it, “That’s just what I need.”

They both down the shot and use some water to soften the bite. The fruity blossom is only a prelude to the tidal wave that is to follow. They both brace themselves as it hits.

Cheryl mumbles in the haze, “If I hadn’t had drunk enough already, I’d go for another one.”

Trish has submerged. She needs Cheryl to pull her out before she drowns.

“Cheryl, that is some tropical punch.”

“You look like you’re going down for the count.”

Both girls are on the roller coaster ride. They are screaming with glee. Robert and his troubles are now a distant memory. They are hanging together as they come down on the other side.

“What was that?” asks Cheryl.

“Whatever it is, too much of it would be lethal.”

The women are looking at a busy Friday. Both are too zoned to move out of their chairs.

“I think that I’m going to need a driver.”

“Just roll out my bed right here,” Trish suggests.

For about five minutes, they sit in place without making a sound. Then they burst out laughing.

Cheryl wonders, “What was that about?”

Trish answers, “I haven’t the faintest idea.”

“I feel as if I’m fourteen and getting drunk on wine coolers.”

“Hello, to adulthood.”

Cheryl stands up for a moment and then falls back in her chair.

“I’m going to be all right.”

“Cheryl, take it slow.”

“Slow, I’m taking it at a standstill, and I’m still rolling back.”

They drink deeply from their water glasses.

“There ought to be a law, Trish.”

Trish maintains, “There is. But we’re not thinking about that now.”

Cheryl holds herself up. “I thought that I was OK. And I’ve been going since dinner. Maybe Robert was right. I needed to head in early.”

Trish waves her hands in the air. “That’s ancient history. We’re fighting now just to stay conscious.”

“Trish, we’ll be OK. Just breathe deeply and pretend that nothing happened.

Trish manages to blurt out something, “Nothing has happened. That’s why it hit us so hard.”

Trish is staring into space. Cheryl is slumped over. They are wondering if they are going to ever get out of this place.

“That’s why we party, Trish. First we’re trying to forget. Later we’re trying to remember. And even later, we’re trying to remember what our names are.”

Trish is stooped over, “I feel like everything I say is so stupid when I’m under the influence.”

“First, I feel it’s brilliant, and later on I realize how idiotic I’ve been.”

“Cheryl, if we can talk about being drunk, maybe we’re not that drunk.”

“We’re that drunk.”

“I need to get home.”

Cheryl offers some advice, “You could get a cab home.”

“Then I wouldn’t have my car for work.”

Cheryl has a plan. “You live the closest to here. I’ll leave my car. I’ll stay at your place.”

“I’ll drive you back in the morning.”

The girls do what they can to sober up. They spend the rest of the evening drinking water. Finally, Cheryl has enough lucidity to stand up.

“Cheryl, I need you to drive.”

Cheryl is surprised how aware she is. She hates to admit it, but she has seen herself a lot worse. She is glad that she doesn’t have to drive home.

She spends most of the drive inching along in the large mall parking lot. She just has to go about a block and she’s at Trish’s place. Trish is a great help. She’s already passed out. Cheryl has to revive her in the parking lot.

Inside, Trish tries to regain consciousness, “You drank more than I did, and I’m the one passing out.”

Cheryl doesn’t want to admit that she has better tolerance. Perhaps, she’s also in better physical condition.

“I think it was that extra shot that you had.”

Trish can't remember whether or not that's true. But she accepts the explanation. It's not the first time that Cheryl has crashed on Trish's couch. This brings back memories, memories that go back to the two of them working at the Anchor together. Trish lived in a different place then. But their adventures together started even before that. They've been doing this kind of thing since high school.

Cheryl met Stevie down at Georgia State when both of them worked together at the Anchor. She remembers suggesting the job to Stevie. She also knew Diane vaguely when they were in high school. But she only got to know her well when they started to work together. They've all been close friends since then.

Trish is the first to shower and get ready for bed. Cheryl knows where to get the sheets and a pillow. Trish lends her a nightie.

Trish offers a final perspective, "I'm glad that we got through that one alive."

Cheryl replies, "I thought that we were going to have to crawl home."

It is almost like a high school sleep over. Cheryl is a little afraid that her lifestyle is forestalling her progress. She is basking in the glow of an eternal adolescence. She has a good career. She's saving her money. But her excitement is still the same. Drinks at the Anchor and crazy boys chasing them. Now the boys seem even more dangerous to her sanity, and the risks are even greater.

Cheryl isn't wiped out quite as bad as the night before.

"I drank way more last night."

Trish has an explanation, "I think that the "Tropical Punch" knocked out the hangover."

"I guess that you're right"

Trish doesn't have as much resilience as Cheryl. She begs off an early appointment.

"I never was going to sell them the house anyway"

"I've got an idea. Let's go out for breakfast. I don't have my meeting until 9:30."

Trish needs something to pick her up. Just give her that extra little go. She tidies up the place from the night before.

"Cheryl, I'll take you to get your car after breakfast."

There's a place nearby, just across from the Anchor. They just beat the rush and get a good table away from the door in a corner.

Trish sits at the table a little disoriented from her night at the Anchor. She's going to get it together before the day snows her under. Cheryl orders a big breakfast. Waffles and toast.

"Trish, how are you going to eat all that food?"

"I'm not. You're going to eat it with me."

Trish orders an egg and coffee."

"I've got enough with this egg."

"No problem. I'll work it off at the gym."

"Do you eat lunch?" Trish wonders."

"Often I'll order up a salad. This will do until late in the afternoon."

"Cheryl's there's more cute guys eating breakfast than there were in the Anchor last night."

"I don't think that some guy is going to hit on you this early in the morning."

"Want to make a bet?"

“Trish, these guys all have to be sauced before they do a thing.” Cheryl spares no decorum as she shoves a big piece of waffle in her mouth.

“You are hungry, Cheryl.”

Cheryl puts on her stubborn face, “Remember that I’m a maneater.”

“I thought that was my title. Besides, you don’t eat meat.”

Cheryl has her own answer. “I do when it’s raw.” They both laugh.

On the way to get Cheryl’s car, they compare notes from the restaurant.

“I wish the nighttime was this fun, Cheryl.”

“All the guys seems to have prospects in the morning. At night, it’s a bunch of deadbeats.”

“Why do their promises all seem so seductive at night?” Trish asks.

Cheryl explains, “That’s because it’s different guys at night.”

“I saw one guy in there that I see at the Anchor. I think that he’s been coming to the Anchor since I used to work there.”

Cheryl is skeptical, “I don’t believe that.

They get to Cheryl’s house.

Cheryl tells Trish, “I’m going to go in and change. See you tonight.”

They give each other a big hug and say good bye.

The food fortifies Cheryl for the day to come. She is again brilliant at her meeting. This time she is much more aware of what is going on. She is moving some biotech stock. She also feels that her client is invested too heavily in stocks.

Cheryl offers her point of view, “When the market is this volatile, you have to have a safety valve. It’s about saving for the long term. Not just making a quick buck.”

The client likes her advice.

Around mid-morning, she fields a call from Robert.

“You had your phone off?” he asks.

“It’s usually off when I have a meeting. Why? Did I miss something important?”

She wants to tell him that this is the sort of thing that he does all the time. She tries to hold her tongue.

“I came by to your place this morning. I brought you breakfast. Where were you?”

She wants to tell him that she was at an early meeting. “When were you there?”

“Around 7.”

“I was over at Trish’s. I just crashed there. Then I came to work.”

She wonders if he’s going to interrogate her any more. He’s already caught her in a fabrication. But he doesn’t pursue it enough to make a difference. She doesn’t have to invent a story about her and Trish watching movies. He moves on to talk about something else.

“I came by because I wanted to see you. I originally wanted to ask you out to dinner. But I’ve got a dinner meeting now.”

“That’s too bad. I would have loved to get together.” She hates to admit that she is almost finding him a pest. Just the fact that he almost caught her in a lie makes her pissed off at him.

She asks, “What about tomorrow?”

“I’m going to be playing golf early in the morning. Maybe afterwards. Although I guess

we'll be drinking all day.”

“Damn. Don't you make any time for me.” She actually wants her freedom for the weekend.

“Call me in the afternoon.”

She's not going to hold her breath tomorrow. Even if he wants to get together, he'll think of a likely excuse before he has a chance to invite her out.

She hates the fact that she is taking it out on him. Things are escalating faster than she can deal with. That doesn't diminish the fact that she's still angry at him. Despite Trish's urging of the night before, she is not ready to break up with him.

After work, she goes to the gym. She still has energy to spare. She knows that it won't last. If she's going to go out with her girls, she's going to need a good long nap. The exercise only gets her ready for that. As she feels the numbing effects of the shower, she realizes what a great day it's been so far. Except for the blow out with Robert, she feels that she is coasting.

This might be the perfect time to cut him loose. But she has no prospects. And he still is a catch. She sees herself older. So devoted to her career that she never took the time to find the right guy. She doesn't want to be bitter. She's seen that bitterness. She can already feel herself hardening. There is rancor. But she doesn't let on to him how she really feels.

Maybe if she sat down with Robert, she could voice her concerns. For the time being, she just swears at him under her breath. Or she conducts these imaginary conversations where she swears at him. Or she tells her friends how angry she really is.

He doesn't have a clue. He really doesn't have a clue. Robert is doing his utmost to keep the relationship going. But he doesn't know what she really needs. He is a little resentful of the Anchor girls. He feels that she will have other friends after they are married. She has no idea what he means by that. But she goes along for the time being. And when she gets really angry, she just disappears inside the Anchor.

He's tried to hang with the girls. He just become a weight around Cheryl's neck. She holds her breath and shuts her mouth. When they go home, she always hears about it. So it's better for her just to say nothing. Just have her own time with her girls.

Friday is hers. She thanks her stars that he has offered her the perfect excuse. As she falls into her pillow, she thinks about all the commotion of the past few days. Being in a relationship shouldn't be this hard. Maybe, Cheryl is being a baby. She wants her freedom, but she wants her security.

Stevie always says, “You can't have it both ways girl.”

That's it. She's going to figure out how to have it both ways.