

15. THE BLESSED

"I want you to meet my new wife."

"Wow, how exciting for you both."

"My name is Ginger. I'm from Akron. We met on the internet. I had an ad out."

"How did you ever think to look in Akron?"

"It was one of those services."

"Brides from Akron."

"No, a dating service."

"I've always thought that those things were a little like prostitution rings."

"No, this one was special. Just for our people."

"How do you know? What's the difference?"

"This one is for the *Blessed*."

I wanted to learn more.

"You can't really join. You have to be chosen."

"You put your ad out. And the right person finds you."

"The *Blessed*!"

"We're here for each other."

"In a special way."

"You can't go it alone. Not the way things are these days."

"You're right about that."

"We have to protect ourselves. I don't have a gun,"

"But we'd have them if we needed them."

"And that moment may be around the corner."

"This is the first stage."

"Education. You have to start now. Not just the kids. The adults too. We all have to be educated to what is happening."

"You can't trust the schools these days."

"You can't trust nobody."

I listened while they tried to educate me.

"You seem like a nice young man. No crazy ideas. But you have to protect yourself."

"It's like an infection. You need a vaccine."

"Although you can't trust what the government gives you."

"Flu shots. Immunization services. First, they try to control your health. Next thing they're going to be giving us a pill to control our minds."

"They wanted to put that stuff in the water a few years ago."

"It took a few freedom-loving people to stop it from happening."

"You can't be too careful."

Ginger didn't look that weird. She had a page-boy hair cut. She used a fair bit of make up. Big red lips. Bud was more down to earth. A bit of a weird streak. I let them talk on.

"It's great to meet a guy who's just like us."

"We can't take this shit lying down. We have to get the word out."

"They're everywhere!"

They proceeded trying to inform me about the economy. They had all these arguments about the benefits of the gold standard.

“There’s a crisis coming. And we have got to be ready.”

“Things are pretty bad for some people these days. Not a lot of work to find. What they find doesn’t pay.”

“We’re talking about a whole lot of stuff that’s a lot worse than that.”

“Believe it.”

“That’s why we’re going to need gold to put things back in shape.”

I thought about this inert metal in the ground. For them, it part of a new engineering miracle.

“You know about how people complain about the world getting too hot.”

“That’s their own sin making them feel that way.”

“You’ve heard the sacred predictions.”

“We’re approaching a new Ice Age.”

“I saw a movie about it once.”

He gave me a big smile.

I was trying to keep up. They were feeding me all this information. I could only process little bits of it. They kept adding lessons upon lessons.

“You people have a way of making a guy like me feel all alone in the world.”

“You have nothing to worry about.”

“Not if you become one of the *Blessed*.”

“Or course, you have to want it.”

“Then it will find you.”

“Should I put out an ad on the internet?”

“You have to know what you’re looking for.”

“You do indeed.”

“This is like a prediction.”

“A prophecy.”

“And there’s not much that you can do about it.”

“Except of course to accept it.”

“You’re not here to question the plan.”

“You have to learn about it.”

“You have to work to put it in action.”

“You just can’t be a spectator.”

“So what am I supposed to do while I’m waiting. Am I allowed to live my life.”

“You can get too involved in self-indulgence.”

“Nothing perverse or habit-forming.”

“The scariest part is the kids.”

“Yeah, all the things that they’re doing to the kids.”

“Who can save the kids?”

“You can’t teach them in the public schools.”

“Even the private schools are cooperating with the government.”

“We can’t allow that.”

“It’s all about mind control.”

“Or the lack of it.”

“We have to counteract all their mind control.”

“That is the only way to get free.”

“We were born to be free.”

“We have to celebrate our freedom!”

I wanted them to slow down. I couldn’t get all of this down. And I could hardly say a word. The two of them acted in tandem.

I found Ginger sort of appealing in a pin-up way. She no doubt had a wild life. Now she was reacting against the excess. She wanted to get back to the simplicity of her childhood. At least, how she wanted to remember how things had been.

I wondered if Bud knew these things about her. She had a wandering eye. She still wanted to gratify her imagination. But the rules had changed. Punishment and penance were the eventual results of her emotional journey. And she would repeat this route again and again.

I gave in to my fantasies about her. I thought of her as collecting bizarre lingerie. I pretended to myself that I could see her modeling for me through her closed blinds.

She stared right at me, “You know that the worst excess in the modern world is perversion. We give in to our idleness and pursue the most unusual desires. You can’t give in to temptation. That is a sure sign that you are one of the damned.”

“The government knows that about people. They lend so much money. Money people don’t work for.”

She carried on his argument, “There are these girls who want to make a living just having sex. We have come to this.”

“Sodom and Gomorrah!”

“It is hideous.”

“You’ve seen those young girls all made up.”

“Showing their asses!”

“They’re glorifying a life of sin.”

“Hideous!”

All the while Ginger was licking her luscious red lips.

Ginger was driving me crazy. All that I could think about was rolling around naked with her in her conjugal bed. The hardest part would be taking the pledge.

Bud and Ginger were proving to be great neighbors. I felt that they were helping me to protect the life that I deserved.

One night Ginger pulled me aside.

“Don’t think I don’t know what you’re doing.”

I looked puzzled.

“I admit that I get a little nervous around you. But that is no reason to try to take advantage of me.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Men are all the same. They lead you on, and then they pretend that they did nothing.”

I only stared back and let her talk on.

“Since I was a young girl, men gave me these leering looks. They thought that they could

just take what they wanted from me. I never had much of a chance of being myself. Or of having my own voice.”

I didn't want to interrupt as she became more dramatic.

“You don't know how much it can hurt. I've spent my whole life trying to cover up. But the same thing keep happening. Guys forcing themselves on me.”

“I'm not really like that.”

“What's wrong? You don't want me.”

I felt as if she was asking me a trick question. I needed to think quickly, “You're a very lovely person.”

“You've been thinking about me in a dirty way!”

“I'm not that kind of guy.”

But she was standing in a very suggestive way. It would have been so easy to kiss her. And she wanted me to know that. I moved back so slightly.

“When I was fifteen, this man lured me to a hotel. And he did things to me. Really nasty things.”

I tried to look suitably shocked.

“I was a little bit of a runaway. I just wanted to get drunk. And he showed me things that turned me on. I knew that it was dirty. But I was attracted to it. From that point on, I couldn't control myself. Sex was this strange adventure for me. I could let go completely and just forget myself. But afterwards, I always felt dirty. I'd drink to forget. Or do lots of drugs. That only made me more reckless. I needed to shock myself even more just to get off. I felt that there was no way that I could ever get off the merry-go-round. Then I realized about the power. I could feel it well from within. They had finally found me!”

“The *Blessed*?”

“You got off on hearing my story.”

“I don't understand.”

“It aroused you. Admit it, you're a bit of pervert.”

“I'm not a pervert.”

“But you wouldn't mind going down on me if I showed you my pussy.”

I pretend not to hear what she said.

“Bud wouldn't mind.”

“So how did you first encounter the spirit?”

“The spirit?”

“How did you get *Blessed*?”

“It something that can't be completely explained. It comes upon you. It's not like something logical.”

I was trying to deal with the contradictions of her personality. She reveled in fucking with me. She loved playing the angel for Bud. And she would do the same for me if I took up on any of her offers.

“I was only playing with you.”

“You're not looking for a little mischief?”

“I'm not looking for a pervert.”

It wasn't so much that I was interested. I was just playing along with her absurdity.

"Was your family very religious?"

"My father left home when I was eight. My mother turned to the Lord. She found also found a new man. He was strict. A believer. And he always gave me weird looks. And he would say things to me that embarrassed me."

"What kind of things?"

"Things about my body. I wasn't sure if I was just inadequate, or he was coming on to me."

"What did you do about it?"

"There wasn't much that I could do. I couldn't tell my mother. She would never believe me. He felt as if I was leading him on. I just felt ashamed."

"So you ran away."

"My step father used to come in my room while I was changing. I couldn't take that shit anymore. So I just snuck out. That's what got me started."

"Do you still think about it much?"

"So much has happened since then."

"You have put it out of your mind."

"I'm a married woman."

"Marriage is the bedrock of civilization."

"We have to do our part to restore the values that we have lost over time. When I was a young girl, I knew the difference between right and wrong. Kids these days feel that they can get away with anything. Movies create the belief that it's OK to be rude. Kids run around with no respect for their elders."

"Do you want to have children?"

"Eventually. There is so much that we have to do to make society a better place before we're ready for more children."

"Things will change?"

"They must!"

"It's a crazy world."

"You don't know how crazy it is. Parents experiment on their kids now. We can't have that!"

"Experiment?"

"They teach them things that contravene the harmonious plans for the universe."

"The plans."

"The movement tell us these things. The Lord tells us these things. Our leaders help us see. Bud helps me see."

"You work?"

"You can't put the reward ahead of the work. We have to find pleasure in hard work. Hard work and low taxes have made America great!"

When I again saw them together, Ginger did her best to play her part of the perfect wife. They were such an attractive couple.

"The man should remain the head of the household. Women are needed to help out. But they shouldn't act all independent. Everyone hates a woman who doesn't realize that her place is

next to her man.”

“Men are the natural leaders. Women are meant to follow. They should never try to do a man’s work. They should never stand in the way of a man. They should never do anything to stand in the way of a man’s happiness.”

I continued to fantasize with about Ginger. I wanted to be part of the movement so that I could get closer to her.

“We can’t let you become one of us without you humbling yourself.”

“Even then, you have no certainty that you will ever be accepted by the *Blessed*..”

“You can’t choose to become one of us.”

“You need to be chosen.”

“Perhaps, you need a mate.”

“A woman will help relieve you of your stress.”

“That is why we have marriage.”

“So that we can march together arm in arm.”

“It is the genius of the movement.”

“We are waiting for the sign.”

“The final conflagration.”

“It will make all our efforts worthwhile.”

“There is so much sacrifice.”

“So much work that we have to do to get us ready for the coming glory.”

“The convergence!”

“The alignment of heaven and earth!”

“There are so many lost souls that are lost along the way.”

“And we are here to help them resurrect their eternal beings.”

“We are here to pass the word to the world!”

“To reach out!”

“For all of us to hold hands!”

“To bring the world together!”

Ginger was sparkling after she had recited the litany. She was bringing the Lord to life; she was raising the dead.

“I can help with your personal salvation.”

“I like the personal part.”

Bud was none the wiser.

“You need to get a wife. There’s a load of them in Akron.”

“It’s a real sin city. Loads of girls who need to be redeemed.”

“You seem to be a good man. You’d be a great lover for a woman like Ginger.”

“We can find you a girl just like me!”

“Without Ginger, I would be nothing.”

“Without Bud, I could no longer fulfill my potential.”

“If you work for it, you will be able to live up to your potential.”

“You will have the life that you deserve.”

“Without the movement, we are nothing!”

“It has made us who we are!”

How far was I to submitting to this New World Order? In my mind, I could visualize the choir of angel gathering together to spread their good cheer.

“If you ever want me to give you some private sessions, just call!”

“Ginger, I don’t think that I am anywhere near ready. I am going to have to prepare myself on my own.”

“I could give you material to read.”

“I am ready.”

Of course, part of me recognized how ridiculous the movement seemed to be. But I was beginning to understand the magic. It made you feel wanted. And once that you felt that you were being included in something greater than yourself, you were ready to make the necessary sacrifice. You were ready to make the leap of faith.”

“Ginger feels that you are part of the family.”

Bud and Ginger acted as if they had the perfect solution for changing the behavior of the incorrigible.

You know what we’re talking about. The guy who gets belligerently drunk at a bar every night.”

“He’s a nuisance with his arms flailing around as he bumps into everyone.

“He can’t see that he has a problem.”

“Even when he lands himself in jail.”

“He can’t stop. His whole behavior is second nature.”

“That is where we come in. This is not just a self-help program.”

“No, the *Blessed* offer a light in the darkness.”

“They help illuminate what is troubling in the soul.”

“And they work to chase away that psychic ill.”

“The man sees his self as joined together with others. And he is no longer subject to the same affliction.”

“This is not about confronting the self one-on-one.”

“It’s about digging deeper in the soul for what really ail a person.”

“It’s a miracle.”

“Or it should be!”

“Other methods leave the individual on his own.”

“Or they isolate him in a small group!”

“With the *Blessed* he realizes that the world is on his side.”

“So he goes through a total change.”

“He immerses himself in the waters of the Lord.”

“He is cleansed completely.”

“He is able to start anew!”

“He is among friends.”

It didn’t completely make sense to me. What if the appeal of his raucous behavior was his desire to escape from authority? Why would he submit to the *Blessed*?

“What if the man has made a temple out of his behavior?. It is his place to lose himself completely. He is able to cast off his distress.”

“Only to make it more intense than ever.”

Bud was getting perturbed at me for even offering a counter-example. Ginger sneered at me, but she understood that there was a reality outside of their proselytizing.

“I just want to understand your faith in a deeper manner.”

There was no deeper manner. It either worked, or it didn't. And they didn't want to accept a reality that didn't fit their narrow prescriptions. They believed that they could cure everyone. And those who they couldn't help were simply not good candidates for the cure.

Their world came in sharper focus. Their legions of faithful gathered their forces together. They showed unity to themselves. But they were an affront to those who would not go along. Their strength lay in a spiritual reconciliation. They were not averse to using physical force to make their point. I sense that day was coming. I felt that someone needed to warn the world about this new force.

“We can't be stopped!”

Their intent had a new ring to it. I could sense an ominous threat on the horizon. They acted with such benevolent air that it would be hard to convince people otherwise.;

The next day they had quickly forgotten about all my objections. Their congenial demeanor returned.

“We wish that we could invite you to a meeting.”

“But you have to be chosen.”

“You need to give your heart to the belief.”

“Then you can be saved.”

“But we can't save you.”

“But it's not up to us.”

“You have to accept the spirit into your soul.”

I was unsure what I should do next. The spirit was preventing me from further monitoring their activities. I wanted to learn more. They all believed that their appeal was universal. That the spirit would engulf large most of America. I need to understand the roots of this movement.

“We're really not allowed to divulge the secrets of the movement.”

I wondered if I could work Ginger to reveal more to me.

“I guess there was a time that I would have been more affected by other people. Now I have the strength to resist.”

But did she?

“So you and Bud have a happy marriage.”

“Our happiness comes from working together.”

“But do you get turned on the way that you used to. That pleasure that takes the body over completely.”

“That was more of disease.”

“And you have cast out the affliction.”

“All of it!”

She appeared over-confident. Her supposed transformation has increased her zeal, but it left a hollow.

I thought about following them. I could discover things about their movement. At least gage the strength of their numbers.

I was sure that they hadn't noticed me. But somehow they took evasive action. It was as if they had been trained not to be followed. I gave up for the time being. If they wanted to get together in secret, let them.

"No one has ever snuck into your meetings."

"No, you have to be a believer."

"You aren't afraid of being infiltrated by the government."

"Of course, we are. That is why we engage in a strict program to supervise our members."

"We have sessions where we are interrogated to make sure that we are not deviating from the proper path."

"It's not a big deal to tell me all these things."

"You are curious. You need to set your mind at ease."

"I want to know."

"I wish that there was some technique that I could use. Or I could just raise a magic wand. This process is beyond me. That is why it is so effective."

"I just want to learn!"

"We want to help!"

I thanked Bud for his advice.

The more that I pieced things together, the more that I saw where all this was headed. These were not innocent souls gathered in a field while trying to call up the gods of the harvest. They were looking at something much, much bigger. They knew their forces, and they knew that there would be a day that they would mobilize. They counted on allies elsewhere in society. This was going to be a total takeover of the country. They were clever to couch their intent in something that seemed so innocuous. Everyone thought that there was nothing to fear.

I started to consider Ginger's place in the movement. She was much craftier than her husband. But went along with things. He didn't bring much planning to his role. He was a foot soldier. Ginger was much more devious. She understand the cultural significance of what was occurring. She had personal grudge, and she intended to personally exercise it.

Her anger was focused on something that she could feel deep inside of her. She was taking the battle public. I thought what I needed to say to her. Could I expose the full nature of her perfidy?

"How did you get like this?"

"The spirit called on me."

"I really don't believe you. There never has been a spirit. Your designs are fueling this kind of thing. I know that you're not one of the leaders. But you have given them the kind of justification that keeps it all going."

"What are you talking about?"

"This is all about something in your past. You think that you can reshape society to answer your questions."

"I am following the Lord."

"You're going along with the movement, and all its aims of society."

"That's not true. This has nothing to do with me."

"What about your life, how it's affected you to accept this doctrine?"

“It’s never been about me.”

“You’re acting as if you can go back in the past and relive some terrible event. Only this time, you’re going to get it right. The evil adult isn’t going to fuck you over. You’re going to turn the tables. But it’s not the same thing at all. The person who did whatever to you is long gone. Or too immune to be affected by your accusations. So you pick on some defenseless chump. You encourage his vices and slam the door on him once he’s in your clutches.

The worst part of it all is that you’re trying to do the exact same thing to the whole of society. You’ve got your villains. And you’re ready to accuse them of the worst of offenses. Things that they have nothing to do with. But you’re going to break them down and feed them to the lions. This isn’t a movement. It’s a lynch mob with all its venom that has no bounds. You won’t stop until you have blood! And if it won’t flow freely, you’ll force it out.

Can’t you see that your enemies have long gone? And now you’re the monster that you claim to fear!”

“Why are you so full of hate?”

“Because you won’t come to terms with the emotions that really motivate. You act as if you have created a world without greed and envy. But you are moved by the basest of human emotions. You embrace revenge. That’s all there is to it.”

“You’re a pervert. I can’t wait for the day that we can put people like you who sympathize with criminal in jail.”

“You can’t try to get back at adults all your life.”

That night she showed up at my place. It was almost as if she was sleepwalking. She was wearing only slippers and a revealing negligee. Her body seemed even more appealing to me. I had to catch myself.

“I came here to apologize.”

This wasn’t at all what I imagined from the movement.

“You could have waited until the morning.”

“I couldn’t sleep.”

“That’s too bad to hear.”

“Whatever I do now, I’m hardly responsible for. So this is your free pass. You can do whatever you want!”

I wasn’t sure what to say.

“I’m not kidding. Here!”

She put my hand on her breast.

“We pay for our freedom with our future servitude,” she whispered.

At that moment, I heard Bud knock on my back door.

“Just checking on Ginger.”

I looked back to see that her breast was still exposed. She did nothing to cover herself.

“She’s here!”

“Ginger, what are you doing here.”

“I couldn’t sleep. I was in a daze.”

“You let her in?”

“I couldn’t send her away in the middle of the night.”

“Why didn’t you call me?”

“She told me that you were asleep.”

“You know what this looks like. That you were taking advantage of her.”

“It’s not what it looks like.”

“It looks like you were violating my wife.”

“You can see how she’s dressed. I just opened the door.”

“I saw you touch her breast!”

“What?”

“I saw it through the window. She pushed you away. But you that didn’t stop you. You were aggressive.”

“That’s not how it happened!”

“I saw it with my own eyes. What about it, honey?”

“He was trying to fuck me. It’s a good thing that you showed up. I was in a daze. Sleepwalking. And he wanted to force himself on me. I did what I could to resist. I’m just weak right now.”

“What kind of sick game is this between you two?”

“He’s been making moves on me since we moved in.”

“Are you angry that we didn’t invite you to our meetings? We tried to help you.”

“We were talking earlier tonight. He was really threatening!”

“I should have bought that gun. I should just kill you with my bare hands.”

“Both of you are in my house. And you’re talking about killing me. What kind of law would allow this?”