

## 16. CHIEF

She pulled out a moist anti-bacterial towelette from the portable dispenser and wiped her hands with it. She had just filled her car with gas and wanted to rub off the germs and gas fumes.

She stared at the starched Indian-cotton shirt of the driver just across from her. Despite all her research, she didn't recognize him immediately. She had to wonder why he was driving his own car and pumping his own gas.

"What's a hottie like you doing alone on a night like this?"

"Excuse me," she said under her breath. She wanted to skewer him with a hot poker. But she caught herself when she realized the brilliant opportunity.

"Hi, my name is Angela!"

For the time being she didn't want him to know her real name.

"You want to come back to my place for drinks."

"Sure!"

How many times had he worked his technique. And had it ever succeeded. She did what she could to facilitate his intent. If only he knew what she was up to.

She thought that he would immediately try to work his magic. But he had a house full of guests. And she had to tolerate the momentary interference.

"Let me get you all some shots."

"I love to swallow," said one particularly vulgar ingenue.

"This is not your strip club, baby."

Even she seemed to laugh at herself.

There were probably five other girls in the room. And at least three or four men wandering through the place.

"You don't keep servants."

"Everyone's off for the night. This is when we really let loose. No witnesses."

Little did he know.

Jimmy did all that he could to control this crowd. His only saving grace was that he would soon be rid of them all. Before that point, they would do their best at raising hell.

"Whatever happens, no blood spilt, please. The carpet is new."

The room was decorated in a flashy white reminiscent of a scene from the 1960's. Very chill jazz complemented the decor. There was just enough anarchy to put things in doubt. But the danger was very focused. The effects were all immediate.

Jimmy made sure that none of the entertainment was long-term. He recognized that there was a time in the near future in which he wanted things shut down quick. He had had other nights where the action had reached its maximum pace. Tonight was meant to be much more restrained. Just a taste of excitement.

The audience was not there to stimulate his fancy. He simply wanted to whet his appetite, and then send them on their way. Thus, they would realize that he was the ultimate at providing a service, like leaving his modestly decorative business card for all.

When one couple tried to make their way to one of his dark corners, he quickly slowed their maneuver.

"You're not going to have that long here!"

They could have questioned their host. Instead, they accepted his intervention.

“It’s time for you all to hit the road!”

Most of them had just got started. They could hardly have the rug pulled from under them this early in the game. But no one complained.

She started to make her way for the door with all the other revelers.

“Sweet, where the hell are you going?”

“You’re kicking us out.”

“Not you sweetheart.”

She was gleeful. Here was her chance. And he was giving it to her free of charge.

Things could not have been more going her way. And he had no idea who he was dealing with.

“You don’t recognize me?”

“Should I?”

“You think that just came her for fun.”

She was trying to size up the situation. She needed to take care of things the best that she could. He was a pretty big man. Although he had been drinking, he was still pretty much sober. She had nothing really to help her out in her appointed task.

She had the perfect remedy in her purse. It was tasteless and odorless. He just needed to get it into her drink.

“Do you want another drink?”

“Let me get you something.”

She needed to muster all her skills to get him a drink. Something that would be appropriately exciting for such a moment.

When he woke up, he couldn’t move muscle.

“What the fuck did you give me?”

“I just wanted to get you in the mood. “

”I am so totally fucked up.”

“Too bad. Guess you partied too hard.”

“This is your fault.”

“You only brought this on yourself.”

“Just take what you want, and leave me be!”

“I don’t want anything here.”

“I can get you money.”

“Do I look like I came here for money?”

“You’re kind of cute. But you did strike me as a space case.”

“What does cute mean to you? It means that you think that you’re going to get some.”

“So you’re some kind of feminist. Do whatever you types do! Just get it over, and put me out of my misery.”

“Put you out of your misery? Someone needs to put you into your misery. You cruise through your pleasure just to avoid experiencing anything remotely close to life. Then you create these artificial complications to make it appear that you really are suffering through your days. Do you have any idea how the rest of the world feels?”

“Me and the rest of the world. I didn’t think that it divided so well. So which side do you represent. The rest of the world who has been wrong by what I do.”

“Don’t worry! There are other like you. You just happen to be the most potent example of your ilk!”

“I’m the one that takes the risk. I’m working all the time to make money.”

“Work. For you it’s some kind of cosmic chess match with the majority of working people as your pawns. You don’t even play with real pieces on your big board. It’s whims and caprice.”

“Let me make this clear to an ideologue like yourself. I started from nothing. I scrimped and saved so that I could have a little something to invest. I have lived the American dream. And ingrates like yourself have tried to begrudge me for what I have. You were willing to drink my liquor a couple of hours ago. Now you have a twinge of conscience.”

“Your liquor was the least that you could offer for being a royal dick. But while you’re in an exalted state, let me bow to your Highness! You scrimped and saved so you could buy your seat in the old boys’ network. And every time that you could get away with screwing some guy you’d run over patent law, bribe politicians and regulatory officials, and empower your own third-world private death-squad all to make sure that the roulette wheels turns your way every time.”

“You have no idea what your talking about. You spout all these cliches. I’m a working man. I put in all these long hours to reap my just rewards, and I know how to have a lot of fun. So what’s the problem?”

“The world’s the problem. What you’ve done to it.”

“If it wasn’t for guys like me, we’d all be living in caves and traipsing along dirty roads.”

“If you could possibly get away with it, you’d have slaves building you pyramids.”

“My companies pay fair wages and benefits.”

“By supporting themselves on subsidiaries that pay subsistence wages.”

“I have to deal with the market as it is. Not how I would like it to be. If payroll costs are too high, I have to find ways to cut down on my costs. Otherwise, I’ll get eaten up by competition.”

“The only thing that is getting eaten up are the unfortunate who work for you.”

“People like me create jobs.”

“It’s like someone’s paying you off to eliminate jobs. You make the few do the most for the least. And you call that economizing.”

“What are you doing to help? Complaining. My companies make things. What are you making?”

“You have few divisions that make some token widgets. Then the rest of your empire sells the futures on those widgets a million times over. No wonder you have to pay the factory workers so low. They have to give their money to every Tom, Dick, and Sara who are benefitting from your ponzi schemes. You should have stuck to selling prime real estate in the Everglades.”

“Money makes money which makes more money which employs people who make things so someone can give little bitches like your self a soap box to blow their bubbles on.”

“What?”

“Nobody cares for your cranky rant and rave!”

“I think that the world is starting to wake up to your mischief.”

“You’re like those conspiracy nuts who think that aliens cause every disaster in our world.”

“If the average person could take the time to follow all your swindles and dirty deals, they wouldn’t need conspiracy theory to get at the heart of their knowledge that they are being fucked over by types like you.”

“I’m not the Chief of the world!”

“You might as well be.”

“If I’m not a dick, the guy next to me is going to be. It’s the only way to stay ahead and survive in the world these days.”

“You survive by screwing the competition.”

“Look at the lion and the lamb. When has it ever been any different.”

“Loads of times. Farmers helping each other at harvest. Workers looking out for each other on the line. Teachers taking extra time with their students. Your world is a tribe of monsters who survive by gnawing on each other. The madness has to end.”

June wanted a puppy.

“Someone is going to have to take care of that puppy. And I don’t think that June is going to do what it takes.”

“Everyone wants to come home to somebody. The familiar bark at the door letting her know that you have arrived home.”

“What are you talking about?”

“I’m talking about the reality that we all live.”

“Those are just words. They have no affect on me.”

She thought about the effort that it would take the rescue the puppy from the pound. Once she got it home, the kids would just go crazy. They’d have no choice but to keep it. The kids would promise to help. But they never would. So she’d have all the extra work that came with having another creature to take care of.

“You said that you’d care for him.”

“I can’t do everything.”

The puppy is barking.

“Who do you think that I am? Who do you want me to be?”

“I want you to be my Dad. I want you to do something bad to me so that I know that’s it’s really you.”

“You’re so taken by your family drama. Why do you think that anyone even cares about our story?”

“Because she thinks that our story could be hers. It could affect her in the same way that it affects me.”

“In that case, I would be a real nuisance to security.”

“Guess that would make you a war criminal.”

“Not just a criminal, but a war criminal.”

“Your threat goes beyond a few individuals. You are a danger to a group, a people.”

“There are legal standards, international principles of evidence. And none of your bills of accusation come up to that level. “

”You are notorious.”

“You have no hard evidence. And no witnesses. Only vague impressions.”

“I’m not working on that basis. I follow my own rules.”

“Just say it. Give me a name. Tell me what I did wrong!”

“And you’ll live up to your reputation.”

“It’s all a matter of degree. Your impressions. It all about perceptions. Sure, I may have harmed a few people. But I’ve helped so many more. And no one can prove the opposite. I am clean.”

“You are just like everyone who plays the game. You love meting out punishment to other people. And you blame the system. The law. The rules. Morality. You salivate as it all transpires.”

“I can’t save other people’s lives.”

“The law is just an ego boost for you. You want people to take their time to explore. To create. But you penalize them for not getting thing done in short order. You torment the procrastinators.”

“What is this about?”

“You threaten you rivals, and when they don’t challenge you back, you cut them down any way as if they have just assaulted you.”

“You want me to feel guilt. To admit to something that I never did.”

“I want to hear your love sighs.”

“That’s not going to happen. I want to hear your death cries.”

“Don’t you eat. We could order in some dinner.”

“There are people dying in the world. Victims of natural disasters. Disease. What are you doing to help?”

“I’m not bleeding the world for profits, jacking up the price of remedy drugs, speculating on emergency services. I’m not choking the poor as they try to elect preventive programs. Or acting as the landlord of properties that couldn’t withstand a strong gust of wind or an earthquake.”

“I’ve taken my own time to travel to the poverty-ridden neighborhoods of Brazil. I give to hosts of charities. I serve on the board of schools and colleges. What are you doing with your armchair critique.”

“I’m glad that you have done penance for your innumerable sins. Jimmy, it just doesn’t cut it.”

“How long does it take this suff to wear off?”

“Who said that it was going to wear off?”

“Are you trying to kill me?”

“You’ve been killing yourself for years.”

“Is that your legal defense?”

“Will I need one?. They’re never going to find the body? So what’s the problem?”

“Murder is a criminal offense.”

“You can’t be convicted for murder if the person never was living in the first place.”

“Do you want to test it? I’ve got a pulse. You can feel my breath.”

“I didn’t come here to get seduced.”

“Even good girls like you can get into a little dirty fun now and then.”

“Men don’t appeal to me!”

“Really?”

“I’m not sure. I’m starting to think that every guy that I meet is a little like you.”

“How so?”

“He thinks that his dick runs the world.”

“I guess that’s the difference between sanity and delusion.”

“Living without one would be sanity.”

“Is that what you know?”

“You might try it?”

“This is not another offer on your part. You really do drive a hard bargain.”

“I’m not playing!”

“What—hard to get?”

“I know that you want to help the world. But what are you contributing that is something new.”

“I am making it personal.”

“It just isn’t. Not in the least.”

“That’s how you always weasel out of it. You act as if you’re not involved when you’re right in the middle of things.”

“But it affects other people just as much as it affects you. They realize that if I get shut down, they get shut down too. Because I’ve made things possible for millions and millions like me. People who succeed by their own efforts, not by hand outs. You hand out things for free, and pretty soon you’ve handed it all out.”

“Which is unlike the hand job that you’ve saddled on the world.”

“Talking clever doesn’t make it right.”

“What are you doing, honey?”

“I’m crying.”

“Why?”

“They just seem so good together. I mean I’ve been watching this whole movie, and they’ve been getting on each other’s nerves. And now they seem so perfect together. She’s just so cute. And he is being such a nice guy.”

“He’s such a jerk.”

“But down deep he has a great heart.”

“He’s going to blow it. Just like he always does. He’s being such a great guy. But he’s going to say something that’s going to make everyone hate you.”

“Here comes that crazy romantic cinematography. And the song! I am just like a gusher!”

“It could be her really cute bangs.”

“Or her goofy smile!”

“I don’t want to see anyone see me crying.”

“I can see you!”

“You should die over this!”

“What are you saying?”

“They’re perfect for each other!”  
 “The spell is going to break.”  
 “You just want to ruin everything, just like he does.”  
 “But you can feel the romantic tension.”  
 “I’m just melting with the excitement.”  
 “I can’t feel my body.”  
 “Are you fainting?”  
 “I’m trying to stay awake.”

“He’s snowing you!”  
 “Don’t listen to him!”  
 “She’s going to get fooled again.”  
 “It’s worse than that. The jerk did it to her again.”

“Someone’s going to have to sacrifice something if we are going to return the world to the state of justice.”

“Put the puppy out of its misery.”  
 “I think that you’re a much better candidate to take the hit for the team.”  
 “I said that I was sorry. I told you that I would love you. I offered you half of the world if you kept your end of the bargain.”

“Just as long as you can make your half of the world just go away!”

She doesn’t go in for love stories.

“KISS HER!”

“It’s going to make the puppy get sick.”

“How about marriage?”

“How about torture?”

“I can take it if you can take it.”

“I’m ready to offer you the next step in our life together.”

“So you are going to make me bleed!”

“I’m only trying to create some balance in the world.”

“Do you always treat your dates with such courtesy?”

“Someone has to pick up the check!”

“I could train the puppy to do that.”

“First, you’re willing to let him die. Now you want him to do tricks for you.”

She needs to check her notes. She has taken too long studying her notes.

“Didn’t I see you out last night.”

“I don’t make friends that easily.”

“I think that it’s everyone’s great wish in life to find the person who is in charge of it all.”

“You’re not really up for that role anymore.”

“I’m just trying to survive. You’re sort of pushed me to that point.”

“Now you’re starting to feel like everyone else.”

“I’ve been trying to reach that point of understanding all my life. And you’ve done me a real service in getting me there.”

“Is there anything else that I can do for you while you’re being a royal pain?”

She didn’t want to take it personally

“There’s someone in there who just had a heart attack. We have to get in there.”

“It’s really nothing. He choked on an orange and had some really bad indigestion.”

She goes over her notes. She needs to make her case clearly and logically.

“You’re pushing me to lunacy!”

“I’ve just arrived a little while ago. I can answer for what you’ve been up to before I showed up.”

“I thought that you were my defense attorney.”

‘I can’t help!’

“Let’s just call us friends!”

“You can open an expense account for me!”

She wants to proceed with her charges.

“So why are you pissed at me?”

“Because you royally fucked me over. But it just looks as if you didn’t do a thing.”

“You knew the rules. You didn’t follow the rules.”

“You made up the rules, because you knew that no one could follow them.”

“Did you even try? We need to protect the world against the crazies.”

“You have a crazy way of looking out for the world. The people that you’re supposed to be looking out for are the ones who you’re endangering. ”

“The system is never going to be perfect. If we didn’t do what we did, all hell would break lose. Things would be a whole lot worse.”

“Things are already as bad as they can be. You want to add some gasoline to the fire.”

“No one’s died recently if I have my facts straight.”

“I’m now working for the same amount that I started at ten years ago. All because your company has been protecting the world. The only thing that you’ve been protecting is your investment. We’re not talking about the loads of people who’ve gotten sick due to insufficient health care.”

“I’m not looking to get in a political discussion with you.”

“My life is my politics. I just want to talk about my life.”

“And we’d love to help you with that. But we’ve done what we can. So what do you expect us to do now. Give you some kind of money back!”

“That would be a start!”

“And what would that be for.”

“For giving me the royal screw.”

“You shouldn’t be complaining. You’re one of the lucky ones. You could have learned your lesson. You could have stayed in school. Instead, you wanted to be a man. Take this like an adult!”

“Are you trying to poison me?”

“That was my line!”

“Which law do you want to take us to court for?”

“For trying to spy on people!”

“You haven’t checked the Supreme Court decisions. We’re allowed to do that. It’s our



property.”

“That doesn’t seem fair. We have to come to work. You shouldn’t be able to look at our private correspondence.”

“We have to check if you’re really doing your work! There is no private at work.”

“Why don’t you allow for equal transparency about your dirty dealings with the government. Or your off-shore labor deals. Or the payoffs that you make to tinpot dictators.”

“If we break a law, then we’ll face the music. Otherwise, we have to hide what we do from our competitors.”

“Guys have this tough act!”

“What about the structure of not being able to say no?”

“Are you telling me that’s my problem?”

“You didn’t just bring me here for fun and games.”

“You brought me here.”

“I never thought that I’d ever get caught for something like that.”

“Well, that’s your problem.”

**“THIS BOOK LOOKS LIKE YOU”**

“All the things that you can’t do for me.”

“And all the things that you can.”

“Why don’t you tell me the truth.”

“You tried to hurt me.”

“Who are you really?”

“Who am I really?”

“There are places where you can get all the answers that you want.”

“What do they call those places.”

“The answer room!”

“We can’t afford the dog until we get a bigger yard.”

“When you’re an adult, you have to do things you don’t want to do.”

“If you have the money, you can do practically anything that you want.”

“That sounds very empty.”

“Do you love her?”

“Are you asking me if I love myself?”

She was driving.

“Where are you taking me?”

“Out in the country.”

“A bit of equalization!”

“Do you have something to show me?”

“I do. But I don’t want you to scream when I show it to you. What am I hiding from you?”

“Are you a man or a woman?”

“What do you want?”

“If you have the money, you can get whatever you want.”

“So why did you fuck my husband?”

“I thought that you were the husband.”

“I’m trying to follow this, but you’re changing the character in midstream.”  
 “There is this girl. And she drugs and torments her pursuer.”  
 “To what end?”  
 “She wants answers. But he keeps giving the same old shit back!”  
 “What if there’s someone who fucked you over again and again?”  
 “You just have to fuck them back!”  
 “Since he has lost his soul, he feels that the world owes him discipline and sacrifice to make up for their indulgence.”  
 “So what?”  
 “It’s his indulgence.”  
 “Hide in a corner, and don’t make a sound.”  
 “What good will that do?”  
 “If you act innocent, there is nothing that he can do to you.”  
 “He can sell me off as a bride. He can force me to eat the magic orange.”  
 “Don’t you already have a heart condition?”  
 “I’m not armed if that’s what you’re asking me.”  
 “You damn shit. You set me up!”  
 “Do you want to play the guy? I’ll let you play the guy if you promise not to prosecute.”  
 “We’re all recovering from something.”  
 “He’s still alive. You’re telling me that you killed him. But he’s still alive.”  
 “So whose body is that?”  
 “I can give you a job. But you’re going to get killed when the operation is over.”  
 “How long do I have to live?”  
 “You should have taken the stairs instead of the elevator.”  
 “The whole plot is coming unraveled.”  
 “You shouldn’t have panicked.”  
 “I had a job to do.”  
 “Now you’ve done it.”  
 “You’re going to jail.”  
 “I’m not going to jail!”  
 “You’ve put a lot of innocent people in there.”  
 “Just put a gun in their hands, and they’re as guilty as anyone else.”  
 “So this girl tortures this guy, because this guy has tortured this girl.”  
 “He had something as innocent as pen knife in his hand. Maybe a fountain pen.”  
 “You didn’t find a guy,”  
 “The pen was mightier than the gun”  
 “Just get out of here. You can escape.”  
 “Escape where?”  
 “I can take you out in the country. I can give you a new identity.”  
 “I want more than that!”  
 “I can give you a new personality.”  
 “I’m tired of being an asshole.”  
 “You’re just like all the people who make the rules. They act as if they are just going

along with some deeper principle. But they are the most self-indulgent.”

“Whip yourself to know what it feels like.”

“It’s not something that you can know just by reading about it!”

“He did it to you. You did it to him. What’s so wrong?”

“He started it.”

“You were into public humiliation. Some kind of artistic ritual. We followed through to the conclusion.”

“He pretends that he likes women.”

“But who does he really like?”

“He has a surrogate.”

“This is getting too complex!”

“We have a simple version. Only boys and girls.”

“Sometimes, you just get off on hurting other people.”

“That’s your thing. I just react.”

“But you do that girl thing. You smile during the rerun!”

“Yeah, but you do it too. So it must be the guy thing.”

“You took the bite out of the apple.”

“But you kissed me.”

“You bought me the puppy.”

“What is Angela’s real name?”

“She’s a little bit of a dance queen.”

“It’s not as if I did those things to myself. You can inflict pain on yourself. But that kind of pain would knock someone out! So you can possibly do it to yourself.”