

17. THE ARCHITECT

"I really like you a lot."

"I'm not going to do anything with you. I go out with your best friend."

"*Go out with*, what does that mean. That you want someone to challenge your so-called commitment."

"We really love each other. What do you want? You want me to go out with you. You'd just find some other girl to like the moment that we agreed to be together."

"So let's not go together. Let's just have a little fun together."

"I'm not that kind of girl. I want someone to really care about me."

"I can care about you."

"I've got a friend who cares for me. If I screw him over, then I'm just taking advantage of the idea of caring."

"You care too much about something that's not even real."

"It's real when Rob and I are together. I'm not going to turn my back on him just because he's not with me one night of the week."

"But this is the most romantic night of the week."

"It's only romantic because you want it to seem romantic. We shouldn't be together. Not that way. We can be friends."

"We can be more than friends."

"I told you that I'm with Rob. And he's your friend. It would be wrong."

"But it's kind of fun because it's forbidden."

"You are so weird. I'm not going to jump into bed with you because you have some ridiculous fantasy about me."

"It's a great fantasy. In it, I'm a super lover. I suppose Rob is super."

"No, but he has a great job. And he has serious plans for the future. His future. Our future."

"He loves his job."

"He should. He's a bloody architect."

"That is very weird."

"What do you mean?"

"He likes building things. And you like to build things up about him."

"You make him sound like some kind of adolescent!"

"You're being just an asshole. There is nothing worse than someone who betrays his best friend."

"If I don't tell you how I really feel, I'd be betraying myself."

"You can't just blurt out whatever's on your mind."

"It would be a lot worse than if I wasn't honest with you."

"You're trying to manipulate the facts to correspond with what you want for yourself."

"I want to be your friend."

"We are friends, but we can't be anything more."

"Don't you feel that there is something really special between us?"

"I do. But not in the way that you think. I feel as if I can talk to you."

“Can you talk to Rob in the same way?”

“Not at all!”

“So it must count for something.”

Emerald was promised to Rob, a promising architect. But Rob’s friend Harry was also interested in Emerald.

“What is this? Some kind of sex saga.”

“No, Robert has worked his way into a bit of a pickle.”

“So what is he going to do about it?”

“I don’t know. He has to go before the board.”

“What’s the big deal?”

“What is an architect’s liability in the case of a personal injury?”

“There are a lot of factors involved here. It may not be the architect’s fault at all. Perhaps the contractor used the wrong material in assembling the building.”

“I don’t think that is the problem.”

“The building owner could be negligent in maintaining the facility.”

“You’re doing everything that you can to let the architect off the hook.”

“What do you want? Do you want the architect to suffer?”

“If he needs to suffer for his behavior.”

“What are you saying?”

“The architect could have colluded with the contractor in using shoddy parts. He could have helped in getting around the inspectors.”

“That seems far-fetched.”

“Someone could have paid off the inspectors.”

“But now the inspectors would be in a fine mess.

“Let’s say that it was fundamentally the developer’s fault.”

“That could jeopardize his whole investment.”

“The final settlement has a lot to do with the nature of the injuries suffered by the plaintiff,”

“It’s already a legal case.”

“I would like to say that they’re close to settling. But there’s a whole lot of investigating that they have to do.”

“I heard that they can’t find the architect.”

“Only the architect really knows what happened.”

“He does so many buildings that his firm may not be able to control the quality any more.”

“An assembly-line approach.”

“Then it all fell apart.”

“So the architect needs to answer some questions.”

“Maybe he’s hiding somewhere. And he needs to wake up and realize that this was all his doing.”

“It’s hard for a person to do that. He makes buildings. He’s not a professor of ethics.”

“But there are standards.”

“Things that a structural engineer could determine before anyone even entered the

facility.”

“There may also be hidden flaws.”

“That could be the contractor’s doing.”

“But the architect worked with the contractor. They reviewed the specs.”

“There still could have been modifications.”

“The architect has a lot to answer for.”

“The architect is nowhere to be seen.”

There was a lot of talk about the architectural miracle. Some spread rumors that the architect had designed a room of deep spiritual importance. It was like a whispering room. But the impact was metaphysical. To be in there was to feel the forces of the ages.

“A building can’t talk.”

“But people can talk inside a building. And the things that they say can be affected by the space.”

“Like a temple.”

“Or a church.”

“This could be the source of the liability.”

“The building was structurally sound.”

“But there was this one room where people could channel all this spiritual energy.”

“As if they were blessed with the gifts of prophecy.”

“And that could be a burden in itself.”

“A little like taking an acid trip.”

“The individual could be open to all these visions.”

“That itself could be a little frightening.”

“Sometimes you have to open your eyes.”

“But you don’t want to see too much. That could be harmful.”

“Some people could take it. It would be like a treat.”

“And it’s all the architect’s doing.”

“He knew about the property of the room. He had studied other sacred spaces. But he took it upon himself to construct just such a room.”

“It’s not as if it was his house. He really couldn’t control who came in there.”

“And no one signed a waiver. No one agreed to the possible negative consequences.”

“Can you ever really sign a document that protects you in such a situation? This is like something that is beyond anyone’s control.”

“Except the architect. It’s like feeding someone bad candy.”

“But did he sit in his room and plan that this would be the outcome?”

“He wanted to make this room.”

“An he knew what was going on. He knew that it would affect different people in different ways.”

“But did he really know that there would be mishaps due to his endeavors.”

“Some people can only take so much reality.”

“It’s not as if he gave them poison.”

“It is a little like torturing someone.”

“You see what you need to see.”

“You can’t blame him for building a room. It’s not as if he made the room collapse.”

“He had to know about the effect. That it wouldn’t be good for all people.”

“You can’t let him off because of his limited liability.”

“We need new laws to deal with this.”

“The laws are already quite clear. That is why this is going to court.”

“But it’s a completely new situation.”

“He was aware of what he was doing.”

“But you can’t blame him for wanting to tell people the truth. Some people just want to live in the clouds.”

“Sometimes the rain is toxic.”

Emerald wasn’t sure if she wanted anything to do with Robert.

“He brought you a puppy!”

“I can’t have a puppy in this apartment. What did he have in his head?”

“He’s still in school. He has a lot to think about.”

“Do you know how he makes his money? He designs prisons. Prisons from which there is no escape.”

“You’re kidding me.”

“He told me that he was using this new concept. The geometry of the prison would keep the inmate locked in his cell. He would have no desire to leave. He would have to be guided out by a guard.”

“I don’t believe that.”

“It’s true. It’s like he’s a member of a secret sect. They understand all the mysteries of geometry.”

“Think about it. If you can do that to a prisoner, you can do that to anybody. We are all prisoners in our own way.”

“I do admit to being a bit of a homebody.”

“This is worse than that. We are being held prisoner in our apartments. We leave. But we feel sick all the time that we are gone.”

“I can’t have a puppy. Think how a puppy would feel being cooped up in here all day.”

“You said that you liked it in here.”

“I do. But that makes me a little freaked out. Why do I even like the things that I do? I feel as if I am being conditioned by these hidden forces.”

“Just do something about it. It’s not like you’re a defenseless puppy.”

“Sometimes, I feel that all that I need is a master.”

“Emerald, that is a sick thought.”

“Think about it. A master could make you feel good about yourself.”

“Or he could spend all his time degrading me. I don’t need to be disciplined more than I already am!”

“That’s the problem in life. Some people think that they know more than anybody else.”

“You were just arguing for having a master.”

“I know. I guess that I really don’t know what I want.”

“So you wouldn’t mind someone telling you what to do.”

“If I was rewarded in the right way.”

“You’d just come to your master wagging your tale.”

“I’d never have to leave the apartment.”

“It would be like a jail cell.”

“This place is pretty big.”

“It’s OK when I’m here by myself. But sometimes I feel that we’re just at each other’s throats.”

“Robert could redesign our apartment.”

“He’s an architect, not an interior designer.”

“You know what I mean. He understands how space works.”

Rob isn’t sure if Emerald is right for him. He knows a girl Holly who is in one of his classes. They meet for coffee now and then.

“You like Holly.”

“But I also like Emerald.”

“Emerald thinks the world of you.”

“I love Emerald.”

“What’s the problem?”

“I want to be with Holly.”

“Get with Holly. Get it out of your system. Then go back to Emerald.”

“That would be wrong. Besides, Emerald might find out.”

“I could be with Emerald. So you’d have an excuse to be with Holly. Then I could quit being with Emerald. And you could leave Holly and go back to Emerald.”

“Emerald would never want to get with you.”

“I get along with Emerald.”

“Because she’s already with me. You’re my friend. And I tell you things about her. And she’s here all the time. So you feel as if you know her really well. But it’s only because she’s with me. And it would be wrong to take advantage of that situation.”

“I wouldn’t be taking advantage of the situation. You would!”

“That’s a weird way to put it.”

“Have you thought about it?”

“It’s a silly idea. And even if it wasn’t, Emerald would never go for you.”

“You can’t say that.”

“We can’t just play with people’s lives as if they’re pieces of wood that we use to build a building.”

“Good metaphor.”

“I’m not kidding. I’m sure that you get my point.”

“What point?”

“That it’s not right to play with these girls like this.”

“But you told me that Holly is so hot.”

“Fucking her would be like taking drugs. I would just lose myself.”

“Emerald’s not like that.”

“She’s really gentle. But sex is never an adventure.”

“Maybe you don’t give her the credit that she deserves.”

“It’s not that. I don’t feel as if I can exist with her in a world of pleasure. We’re just

naked together for a short while. Just to say that we're together. Then it's back to the world of clothing and hush hush."

"Why are you sharing this with me?"

"I need to figure it out."

"So what am I supposed to do with Emerald?"

"Nothing. She and I are still together. And even if we weren't, you'd have to find some other girl. I'd feel as if it was wrong for her to come over here to be with you."

"It's not as if you own her. You're not even married to her."

"I don't know what that means."

"You're telling me how you want to get naked with Holly, and I'm supposed to believe that you should stay with Emerald."

"I'm just voicing my opinions out loud. Don't tell me that it would be better just to sleep with Holly."

"I just feel that you need to be honest with Emerald."

"I am honest with her. I'm just not going to tell her that there's this girl Holly who I'd like to hook up with. That would devastate her."

"She has to know what you're thinking."

"The only way that she would know is if you told her. And you can't do that. You're supposed to be my friend."

"I am your friend. But I can't keep all your secrets."

"Quit being such a dick. I told you this because I didn't want to tell Emerald."

"I'm not saying that I'd tell her."

"What reason would you have to tell her? You don't even have that kind of friendship with her. When was the last time that you talked to her on the phone?"

"So you really want to get with Holly."

"I fantasize about her all the time. My whole body just turns to liquid thinking about her."

"You have to get it out of your system."

"I've tried. I even thought about her a few times that I've been with Emerald. But I just can't complete the fantasy."

"We could try my suggestion."

"I don't want you hanging around Emerald. Especially not now. You are going to say something accidentally. And then she is going to figure it out."

"I can't lie for you."

"Quit being an asshole. If Emerald asked you about another girl, you'd have to tell that there was none."

"But you told me all about Holly."

"And that was in private."

"You shouldn't lead Emerald on."

"I'm not. She just has to be freer. If Holly became Emerald, everything would be OK."

"That makes no sense."

"If Emerald was as adventuresome as Holly, that would be great."

"But you told me that she doesn't have the same kind of body."

“She doesn’t.”

“So she could never really become like Holly.”

“You know what I am saying.”

“You’re going to have to make it clearer to me.”

“I’m with Emerald. That’s as clear as I can make it.”

“And you want Holly.”

“I want lots of things. Maybe you shouldn’t encourage me to think this way.”

“What are you saying?”

“That Holly isn’t such a great idea. And you shouldn’t pretend as if she is.”

“I’m only listening to you. But you were the one who told me all about Holly.”

“I know!”

“Maybe I should be with Holly. That would help you forget her.”

“You can’t put yourself in my life. You have to find your own girls.”

“But the ones that you find are so attractive.”

“You need to quit living in other people’s fantasies.”

“It’s not as if I can just remake my mind.”

“You need to try.”

“I’m not a scientist like you. Besides, what good is all this thought if you can’t put Holly out of your mind.”

“I could try to be with Holly.”

“Take a chance!”

“She is so tight.”

“Now you’re talking.”

“One day she was wearing heels, and her the calves of her legs were so well-defined.”

“Stairmaster. That isn’t all that’s defined. You’ve got to go for it. You’re getting me excited just talking about it.”

“You’re crazy.”

“But you’re talking about it. You have the intent. It’s like you’ve already done. You feel the guilt, but you get none of the pleasure.”

“I can’t just live in my fantasies. I’m with a real girl who cares for me.”

“And you’ve found this really hot girl who can gratify all your fantasies. She can make them all real.”

“I’ll never get my work done.”

“You’ve got to live.”

“This is from the man who is imprisoned in this apartment.”

“I do what I can.”

“And I do too. I’m with Emerald.”

Holly. “I’ll watch Emerald. I won’t touch her. I’ll just distract her. Then you can be with Holly. You can see what it’s like. After that you can go back to Emerald.”

“What if I like being with Holly? I don’t want to hurt Emerald’s feelings.”

“Get in a fight with her. Then go out with Holly. Not a real date. Just something during the day time. Then you can see guilt-free how it works out.”

“I’m not some kind of Svengali trying to hypnotize these girls.”

“Holly seems to be doing pretty well without hypnosis.”

“There has to be more in my life than sex. Friendship counts for a lot.”

“You’re young. Live a little. Get a conscience when you’re older.”

“I feel like a serial killer. I’m plotting all these things with these woman.”

“It gives you a rush, doesn’t it?”

“Why are you such a sicko?”

“I’m just vocalizing your feelings. What’s the big deal. You have two wonderful girl who want to be with you.”

“Being with is more than wanting to have sex.”

“Don’t you think that I know that? But what are you thinking about when you’re looking at Holly?”

“I’m thinking that I’m over my head.”

“You’ve already sinned. Do the deed. Get it over with. You’ll only feel the remorse after you’ve been a little more corrupted.”

“You’re encouraging this shit. Is this how far we’ve come as friends?”

“I’m trying to take Emerald’s side too. Maybe you should be honest. Just break up with her.”

Rob went off to do his homework.

“You could dump him, and none of this would ever be his problem.”

“He’s your friend. Does he ever express doubts about being with me?”

“He really loves you.”

“He doesn’t talk to you about other girls.”

“There are no other girls.”

“He’s the perfect guy.”

“So what’s the problem.”

“I don’t know. I don’t know how to put this. I don’t know if I can just be with one man.”

“But he loves you.”

“The sex with him is so unsatisfying.”

“You shouldn’t be telling me that.”

“He has no sense of adventure. You’re sure that he isn’t with some other girl.”

“He does his homework all the time. All the time! He has no time for other women.”

“I want to believe you. I really do.”

“I’m not lying for him.”

“I just don’t know if I feel for him the way that I used to.”

“Then leave him.”

“I’m not that kind of girl. I promised to be with him during the rough patches. And this is one of those times.”

“Follow your heart.”

“I don’t even know why I’m telling you this.”

“I’m a good listener.”

She nodded her head., “Does he even know that you’re here?”

“I think that he’d feel weird if he did.”

“You have to know that I have a little bit of a crush on you. I did from the moment that I

met you.”

“Why are you telling me this?”

“I feel the need to be honest with you.”

“I’ve had dreams of kissing you. Just kissing you. And holding your hand.”

“You’ve never said anything to Rob.”

“He’d kill me.”

“Rob doesn’t understand.”

“It would be wrong if we were together.”

“Even if I broke up with Rob, I could never get with you.”

“It wouldn’t be wrong if I touched you. Let me give a back rub. You seem so tense. It would help you get rid of these feelings.”

“It would.”

“Yeah, I can make you feel really good.”

“Sometimes you can say things with touch that you can’t say with words.”

“Emerald, you are a naughty girl.”

“Let’s just say that I’m waking up to the world.”

“You’re freaking me out.”

“Just give me a hug.”

As Harry held her, he began to slide his hands down her hips. She looked up at him. She wanted to tell him to stop. But there was such longing in her eyes.

“This is so wrong.”

“Kiss me!”

Emerald confessed to her roommate.

“Is this about the puppy? You didn’t sneak him in here.”

“I slept with Harry.”

“He’s pretty hot.”

“He’s Rob’s friend.”

“Was it good?”

“Too good. I feel as if I’m a woman.”

“You’ve had sex before.”

“Nothing like this. I could hardly feel his body. We just blended together. It was as if I was drunk. And it was the middle of the afternoon.”

“You’re not going to tell Rob.”

“He’s never going to find out.”

“What about Harry?”

“Harry is totally in love with me.”

“What are you going to do about it?”

“I’m not going to sleep with him again.”

“You can turn him off like that. If it was me, I’d be burning all over for him.”

“I’m trying to tell you that this is wrong!”

“You did it. You enjoyed it. Just don’t let on to Rob.”

“That would make me such a bad girl.”

“It’s not as if Rob really knows the difference.”

“Rob brought this on himself.”

“Rob has been the perfect guy.”

“Perfect for what. Harry rang your bell. Ring it again. Ring it from the top of a mountain.”

“This is so natural.”

“It’s biology.”

“It’s me being a jerk.”

“Girls can’t be jerks. It’s not in our nature. We’re honest with our emotions. Unlike guys.”

“So how am I supposed to be honest?”

“Tell Harry to hurry over. Because if you don’t use him, I will.”

“That would be so wrong.”

“He’s got enough sex power for two!”

“I’m not sharing him. And you can’t take him after I’m done with him.”

“When is that?”

“I’m supposed to meet Rob tonight.”

“Then Harry will be free. Give me his number. Tell him that I’m a lot less inhibited than you are.”

“I don’t think that a person could be less inhibited than I was!”

“You go girl.”

Harry had crashed another night at Rob’s.

“Harry, I really fucked up.”

“What did you do?”

“I got together with Holly.”

“Fuck, you slept with her!”

“I wish. It was terrible. We met up for afternoon drinks. And she had one thing on her mind. She was in a low cut blouse. And a short skirt with high, high heels. And there was so much gloss on her lips that you could skate on them.”

“What’s the big deal?”

“She was such a bore. All that she could talk about was herself. She shops all the time. She spends all this money that she doesn’t have. Her great dream in life is to find a guy who’s going to pick up the tab for her all past indiscretions.”

“You did her anyway.”

“I was almost sick. I had to get out of there.”

“You ditched her.”

“Not before I got really trashed. I embarrassed myself.”

“You said that you didn’t sleep with her.”

“I didn’t even kiss her. I just regret giving her my time that way.”

“You had fun!”

“No, I didn’t. And Emerald is going to realize that I’m a little tipsy.”

“Drink some coffee. You’ll be OK.”

“No, I won’t. She’ll know that I was with this other girl.”

“It’s not as if your guilt is written all over you face.”

"It might as well be. I have to tell Emerald."

"What are you going to tell her?"

"That I lied. I told her originally that we could meet in the afternoon. Then I said that I had a project for school."

"You can never trust a student."

"See! You're so right!"

"Don't be stupid. You have nothing to worry about."

"I'm a terrible date right now. I don't think that it would be a good idea for her to see me like this."

"Call it off. You're in no shape to go on a date."

"I lied to her once. I can't do it twice in one day."

"You can't tell her what happened."

"I'll tell her on the phone."

"Tell her that I met you at the library. And I cajoled you to have drinks with me. And you got too drunk to go out."

"Do you think that she'll believe me?"

"You're so honest, Robert."

"She's going to want to come over here."

"So what!"

"You're going to have to leave."

"No problem. Where did you leave Holly?"

"You're such a dick."

"Have a heart!"