

6. MY DAUGHTER'S LOVER

"Is something wrong with you?"

"I need you to do something for me?"

"Get you a drink?"

"Your days of being my private bartender are over."

"I haven't been good enough for you?"

"You've been quite good. It's just that I need you to do another mission for me."

"And what is that? To get a detailing job done on your car."

"No, I need you to sleep with my daughter."

"I'm already with you. What is this some kinky mother-daughter thinking?"

"She isn't to know that I know you."

"So why are you doing this?"

"I'm not going to do it. You are. Think of it as a job."

"I don't even know the girl. How do I know that she's going to go for me?"

"I've gone for you."

"That makes me wonder. Why isn't that enough for you?"

"Because I'm not like her! I get off on power."

"Having me seduce your daughter."

"More than seduce her. I want her to fall in love with you."

"That seems like quite a tall order."

"I'd have to take her breath away."

"You took mine away."

"It's not the same!"

"Are you saying that I'm not a catch?"

"She's a young girl. She probably has loads of guys flitting around here. Wait a second, she does right? She's a looker?"

"I'm her mother. I may not be the best person to ask. But she does quite fine in the looks department."

"That's what I'm afraid of."

"You'll do OK."

"With all those younger guys. Doesn't she have a lover?"

"That's what worries me."

"And you expect me to make him go away with a wave of the hand."

"I've been grooming you for this job all this time. The apartment, the clothes, the culture. This hasn't been all for my entertainment. Or yours either. I had a motive."

"To seduce your daughter."

"To seduce May, my daughter."

"I'm running out of money."

"Money's not a concern."

"Aren't you going to miss the sex?"

"I told you that there's more to life than sex."

"You are one serious witch."

“You can do the job?”

“I don’t even know what she looks like. Where to find her. How to make my approach.”

“I’ll fill you in. I’m certain that you can take it from there.”

“I can try.”

“You need to do more than that. You have to make her fall in love with you.”

“Is that all?”

“You have to make sure that you don’t fall in love with her.”

“Is that all part of the Grand Finale?”

“I am working all that out.”

“Do you need some help?”

“If I need you to finish the job, I’ll tell you what to do. And I don’t want you to improvise along the way.”

“I have to use the skills that I have.”

“All’s well and good. Just remember who’s running the show!”

“Very good! Are we going to toast to our new endeavor?”

“We’re going to do way more than that.”

May Henderson was in her last semester at the University of Maryland. She had decided to bring Edwin James home for spring break. Edwin had just been accepted to law school at Georgetown. It was her hope to announce her engagement while she was home for the holidays.

Stella intended to bestow all the graciousness of the Henderson household on her potential son-in-law.

“He’s quite a go-getter.”

May agreed with her mother although she wasn’t quite sure what she meant by her comment.

“I want you to be nice, Mother.”

“You can think of Edwin as part of the family.”

“That’s what I’m afraid of.”

“You’ve got so cynical at college. I have done my best to sacrifice for you over the years.”

“I guess that’s what you call it when you can’t be the center of attention. Just remember to do your best to be your nice.”

“I’m always nice, May.”

Edwin washed and dressed for dinner. He wanted to do his best to impress May’s parents. Edwin and May made the perfect picture at the dinner table.

“What do you have against him?”

“Nothing at all, May. Why would you think that I bear him ill will?”

“You did your best to embarrass him at dinner.”

“I did nothing of the sort.”

“You couldn’t resist bringing up my high school years. And the boys that I was with then. You couldn’t have made him feel more out of place.”

“I just wanted him to know that you’ve always been quite the catch.”

“I’m not a prime heifer at the state fair.”

“I’m not pretending that you are. I just want him to know that you’ve always been quite

the social star.”

“He knows enough about my past already, Momma. I don’t need your help in making him feel uncomfortable.”

“I just want him to know what kind of family he is joining.”

“You keep doing a job like that, and he won’t want to have anything to do with me.”

Later that evening, May tried to apologize to Edwin.

“Your mom’s quite charming.”

“You didn’t feel that she was interrogating you like some kind of cop.”

“I found her quite charming. I have grandmothers who are much more intimidating than she could ever be.”

“Then you don’t want to call it off, and send me off to some kind of lover’s limbo.”

“I didn’t come this far to call it off.”

“I only wish that my dad had a little more to say. All he seems to care about is making money.”

“It is rough these days. When you have it, everyone wants to take it away from you.”

“So you see him in quite a flattering light.”

“He’s quite a successful man.”

Despite her mother’s absurd display earlier this evening, this was seeming much easier than she thought almost too perfect.

At breakfast, Stella seemed to offer her blessing on the upcoming nuptials.

“He’s a very nice man. He will do you proud.”

“That’s the kind of message that you put on a greeting card..”

“Your father likes him too.”

“From you point of view, that’s never a very positive thing.”

The weekend went off fabulously. Despite Stella’s occasional objections, there seemed little that could stand in the way of the royal couple. And Richard Henderson had made it clear how much he favored the union.

“This is going to be a lot harder than I thought.”

“You were the one who extolled my talents.”

“I didn’t realize that your competition had dug in so deeply.”

“I’ll have to outflank the blackguard.”

“You really think that you have the resources.”

“Nothing that a little black magic can’t make happen.”

“I have no idea what you’re talking about.”

“What’s the guy’s name? Edwin Booth. I could challenge him to a duel.”

“Edwin James. That’s his name. And I don’t think that the duel idea is going to work.”

“You just want me to assassinate him in a park.”

“All this humor about killing him was just joke.”

“I thought that you hired me for a job.”

“There was never any strict quid pro quo.”

“So what do you want me to do.”

“I want you to win over my daughter.”

“And how do I do that if she already loves someone else.”

“That is what you are being paid for.”

“It would be so much simpler just to off him.”

“That would be illegal. We can do anything short of that. But we can’t actually hurt him.”

“You’re hurting your daughter.”

“This is a labor of love!”

He studied the dossier with a killer’s eye. This was a matter of life and death. And he needed to finish on top. He stared at May’s picture. He could see that haunting resemblance to her mother. He would have to use all his resources to succeed.

He was clued into her probably hang-outs. He spent his time in the corner of Caper’s as he stalked his prey.

It took a while before the crowd showed. And he had a little bit of difficulty trying to spot her in the crowd. It wasn’t as if she was hard to spot. In fact, the crowd might as well have been there just to show her a good time. As soon as she let loose, they all gathered around her as she was the life of the party.

She had expected Edwin in for the weekend, but since he didn’t show, she needed some kind of boost just to let her get back to normal. After a few shots, she was just hitting her stride.

“Up on the bar, girl.”

The next thing that she knew, she was up on the bar dancing her heart out. This was hardly the staid girl that her mother was accustomed. Even her father might have been scandalized by her crazy shenanigans.

“Why did you get down?”

“I’ve had too much to stay up there. I was starting to lose my balance.”

The action seemed a little less freaky as she took her place on the bar stool.

“Why don’t you get up on the stool?”

“It’s spinning around.”

It wasn’t long before she slipped off the stool. She tried to make a graceful recovery. No one seemed to notice. She was safe.

As May turned towards the other side of the bar, she realized that someone was watching her.

“You didn’t see me fall off the bar stool.”

He tried to hide his smirk.

“No, I didn’t see a thing.”

“So no one caught me falling on my ass.”

“No one noticed a thing.”

“Well, every guy has had his eye on you since you walked in here. But they all turned their head when you fell. So there were no witnesses.”

“I’m so embarrassed.”

“Maybe I can buy you a shot to help with the pain.”

“I’ve probably had enough to drink already!”

“I don’t think that there is any such thing as enough.”

“I don’t need a tempter like you.”

“So that’s what I mean to you.”

“I sort of like your horns.”

“I don’t think that you need any excuses to act the part of a bad girl.”

“Am I really that bad?”

“The word is still out on that one.”

“So what are you studying?”

“I’m not in school.”

“What are you doing in a hell-hole like Silver Springs, Maryland?”

“I was interviewing for a job in sales for a drug company.”

“I thought that they usually hire hot girls.”

“I figured that out in the interview.”

“So you’re unemployed still.”

“I’ve got a little family money.”

“I do too. Maybe we have a little more in common.”

“I wish!”

“You have a fairy godmother too.”

“You really are flying!”

“I told you that you that I’m shit-faced.”

“You’ve got quite a pretty face!”

“Didn’t your momma tell you that flattery don’t get you nowhere?”

“Didn’t your momma tell you that you shouldn’t work guys for compliments?”

“Are you trying to tell me something?”

“That you’re not the hottest girl in here.”

“You’re playing with me. I will take that shot.”

“You’re getting into the game.”

“You’re not trying to take advantage of me.”

“Did your momma tell you to beware of strangers?”

“She did. But I never listen to her.”

“So what’s standing in your way?”

“I have a fiancé.”

“Sounds more like guide dog.”

“He is a lovely boy!”

“So what are you afraid of?”

“That maybe I’m not good enough for him.”

“Who are you kidding?”

“He’s going to law school. I have no idea what I’m doing with my life.”

“What are you studying?”

“I’ve got a double major. Computer design. And Art History.”

“What artists are you into?”

“I did a summer session on Monet in Paris?”

“That must have been fantastic. Have you ever heard of Rains Miner.”

“The realist from Hackney. I love his work.”

“He’s a friend of mine.”

“You’re kidding me.”

“No, we were drinking buddies in London. He’d take me to these crazy parties all hours of the night.”

“And he still had time to work.”

“I’d be crashed in his studio, and he’d be up at dawn working.”

“I wish that I had that kind of talent. I have to be satisfied with some scratching at the computer terminal.”

“We all have our own passions.”

“I wish that Edwin was as understanding.”

“He isn’t?”

“He tells me that he’s going to earn enough for the both of us.”

“That’s not good enough for you.”

“First, I’ve lived off my Dad’s money. Then it’s going to be Edwin’s. I want to make my own way.”

“Even if it means living in the poor house.”

“I’m going to land on my feet.”

“You’re going to get pretty much what you want in life.”

“Is that more flattery?”

“You just seem to have an air about you.”

“An air. I guess that you like my tune.”

“Anything that you play. Oops! I guess that didn’t come out quite right.”

“What are you telling me?”

“Maybe I’m telling you too much already. How long have we been talking?”

“A half hour or so.”

“You know that I really like you. And I don’t even know your name.”

“I’m Will.”

“I’m May.”

“May, that’s a pretty name.”

“Sorry, there’s not much that I can say about *Will*,” she laughed.

“You have a cute smile.”

“You’re getting a little too close. Do you want to kiss me?”

“Yes, I do.”

“I’m married!”

“Not yet!”

She lets him kiss her deeply. For that moment, there is no Edwin.

“Want to come back to my place?”

“Are you sure that you want to do this?”

“If I don’t do it now, the regret is going to take over.”

“I’m not the sort of guy who likes to get used and tossed away.”

“That’s not my intention.”

“What’s going on?”

“It’s the alcohol talking. And I’m listening.”

“I shouldn’t take advantage of you.”

“Are you going to tell me that you do this kind of thing all the time?”

“No, I’m just not sure that this is what you want.”

“Kiss me again, and help me figure it out.”

They embrace even more passionately than before.

“What about your fiancé?”

“Who?”

“I don’t want you blaming me for messing with your plans.”

“We’re just having some fun.”

“We should do this another time.”

“Working some more negative psychology on me.”

“If you really want it, you should wait.”

“If I really want it, I want it now.”

“Whatever you do, you can’t tell Edwin.”

There was a knock on Will’s door. Stella Henderson was standing there with a bottle of wine and a couple of glasses.

“Are you room service?”

“Are you going to invite me in?”

“I’m not really into hanky-panky tonight.”

“That’s not why I’m here. I want a full report.”

“This is going to be a lot easier than I thought.”

“It’s one thing to get her to pine after you. It’s quite another to get her to dump Edwin. I’ve taught her to be one practical girl.”

“She’s a romantic at heart.”

“I need you to do a job. I don’t want her turning into monster.”

“I’m not going to change her in the least. I’m just going to help the real May come out.”

“I can hardly imagine you having sex with my daughter.”

“You didn’t hire me to take her jogging.”

“If that would do the trick, that would be quite sufficient for me.”

“Girl breaks with fiancé after she goes for a good run!”

“I only wish. So has she slept with you yet?”

“A gentleman doesn’t reveal his indiscretions.”

“I’m not paying you to keep your mouth shut!”

“What do you want?”

“I want you spell everything out for me, chapter and verse.”

“She’s your own daughter.”

“And you’re my ex-lover.”

“Ex?”

“I’m not going to sleep with you while you’re working on my daughter. Besides, I have scruples.”

“Scruples.”

“I have to keep you hungry while you’re on the hunt. I know all about your appetites.”

“You could help me take the edge off.”

“I don’t have an edge.”

“So you’re going to help me make this happen.”

“That’s why I’m here. Is there anything that you need me to tell you about May?”

“Did you teach her all your secrets?”

“Are you crazy? That’s why I’m still in charge.”

“What would she do if she knew that you were behind this?”

“She’d disown me. Me and her father.”

“Why don’t you just let this be?”

“I can’t. It’s not in my nature. The worst part of it all is that she has no idea in her wildest imagination that I could be doing something like this.”

“That’s not a very appealing testimonial on your part.”

“I’m not really in for the Mother Theresa sweepstakes.”

“That is a bitchy thing to say.”

“I’ve accepted my calling. I hope that you have as well.”

“I’m learning from the best. If only May could see this side of you. I’d have no chance against her.”

“I told you that I kept my best for myself.”

“Why even bother with May’s Dad.”

“He still has official control of all the finances.”

“I think that I’m getting the big picture.”

“I’m glad that little brain of yours is doing something besides scoring bimbos.”

“You’re not putting down your daughter.”

“Not at all. I’m just talking about what you were up to before I salvaged you from the dead.”

The next weekend, Edwin took a plane up to see May.

“May, is something wrong? You’re not getting cold feet about the marriage.”

“I feel as if we’re rushing things. You still have to go to law school. I’m not sure I know what I want. I’ve been thinking about doing some traveling.”

“We could travel together.”

“I’m not handling this right.”

“What are you trying to tell me?”

“I’m not trying to tell you anything. It’s just like always. You’re not listening.”

“I’m trying to listen. I don’t understand what you’re saying.”

“I love you. I want to be with you. At least, I think that I do. We’re just rushing things.”

“Is it your mother? Has she finally got through to you.”

“It has nothing to do with my mother. If anything, she’d want to marry me off. No, this is all me.”

“So what is it?”

“Don’t you wonder if this isn’t right for us? Not now!”

“I know that it’s quite a big deal planning for a wedding.”

“Don’t you look at other girls and wonder if it’s too much just to be with one person all your life.”

“That’s just an excuse. I love you.”

“I’m not sure if it’s enough.”

“Enough how?”

“Edwin, I did something really stupid. I made out with some guy that I met in a bar.”

“You didn’t sleep with him?”

She shakes her head.

“That’s nothing.”

He wasn’t sure if she was admitting to more. He didn’t want to probe for more.

“This is no big deal, May.”

“I’m confused.”

“You don’t have feelings for him.”

“I don’t know what I want.”

“Have you seen him again?”

“No!”

“So you just did it, and you forgot about it.”

“That’s how it happened.”

“Then it’s all done.”

Edwin wondered to himself if this gave him a free pass for his own mischief. But he was going to be a lawyer. He didn’t need free pass to do whatever he wanted to do.

“I didn’t think that you were going to call.”

“Quit being devious! You knew that you were going to call.”

“I can’t forget that night. And Edwin has been a bloody bore.”

“You haven’t told the poor chap.”

“I spilled the beans. Only I didn’t tell him that we slept together.”

“We didn’t really sleep together.”

“You’re such a naughty boy.”

“What do you want to do?”

“I didn’t come her to discuss Constitutional Law.”

“You did agree to meet me in Washington.”

“I didn’t think that you were still in the area.”

“More business.”

“Do you have a job?”

“Something temporary”

“I guess that’s better than nothing.”

“It lets me stay in the Shoreham. I’m not complaining.”

“Is the bed big enough for two?”

“I don’t know. That depends what kind of games you have in mind.”

“I’ve got some really nasty games in store for you.”

“You don’t know the half of it. So where’s Edwin?”

“He went back to Virginia. Maybe that’s better for all of us.”

“I guess that it is. What about your parents.”

“I haven’t told them a thing.”

“You’re just being a bad girl.”

“But it seems like so much fun.”

“When you’re being naughty, the fun just comes naturally.”

“Spoken from the lips of the devil.”

“That’s my job.”

“What are the wine glasses for?”

“I had a guest up here. An old friend.”

“Looks like you cleaned the lipstick off of her glass.”

“What do you take me for?”

“I don’t know. How many girls do you have hidden on the side?”

“I don’t get into the chase. I’m more of a serious kind of guy.”

“The kind who wants to settle down with a wife and kids.”

“A wife maybe. The other man’s wife.”

“What if I don’t marry Edwin? Will I still be a catch?”

“You’re really thinking about not marrying him.”

“At first, I told myself that it was a mistake. But I kept thinking about it. It got so bad that I confessed.”

“You did what?”

“I confessed.”

“You really wanted to hurt him.”

“He had been such a prick lately.”

“But he went to your parents’ house. And he had to deal with all that shit with your mother. She sounds like spiteful person.”

“She is!”

“And after all that, he still wanted to be with you.”

“That’s the thing that seemed weird to me.”

“You’re a lovely girl. Why wouldn’t he want to stay with you?”

“I don’t know who I am. I don’t know if I’ll ever know that again. I’ve turned into this pleasure machine.”

“You’re just searching.”

“I want you to hold me!”

“That’s not going to solve anything.”

“I don’t care. I just want to forget.

Will had done a fine job up to this point. The end game was going to be much more difficult.

“She’s going to want to know how I keep myself afloat.”

“You’ve done your job. She broke it off with Edwin.”

“Are you telling me not to see her anymore?”

“I want you back.”

“I can just turn off my feelings like that.”

“You have no feelings. You work for me.”

“Why are you so cruel? Why did you do this to your own daughter?”

“I wanted her to learn a lesson. That there was nothing that she could want that I couldn’t take away.”

“Why didn’t you seduce Edwin?”

“Edwin was full of himself. He had created this image of my daughter, and he was doing everything to make her fit it. Let him be off!”

“I thought that you told me that he had designs on your money.”

“He knew about my daughter’s trust fund. And more!”

“A con artist.”

“Exactly, my sweet. Now pour me a glass of wine.”

“What about the time when May invites me up to the house?”

“You have to break it off with her before that.”

“What if I don’t?”

“I’ll tell her everything.”

“What will you tell her? That you used her as a pawn in your grand scheme to get all your husband’s money.”

“Can you blame me?”

“Not at all. We’re both alike. But you can’t let her know. She knows you’re manipulative. But she still believes that you’re trying to teach her some life lesson. If she really knew, she’d hate you for life.”

“I’d take that risk if I knew that you were going to hang around.”

“That sounds like a threat.”

“I could make you go away if that’s what I need.”

“I thought that’s where I came in. I was supposed to be the killer.”

“And you’ve been killing me, my sweet. So get the bed ready.”

“One last time!”