

12. DAMAGE CONTROL

“Who is that?”
 “My guardian?”
 “Do you have to go back to him?”
 “I have to go back to the center. He was abusive to me. So I don’t have to go directly to her.”
 “He’s seen you. What does that mean?”
 “I can pretend that I haven’t seen him. If he catches up with me, he can make me go back.”
 “What do you want to do?”
 “Let’s just keep moving.”
 “Where are we going to go?”
 “I need you to help me. We can go to your place.”
 “Yeah!”
 “You look a little uncertain about it.”
 “I am. My living situation is a little weird.”
 “What does that mean?”
 “Let’s just get out of here!”
 “I agree!”
 “How did he abuse you?”
 “I don’t want to talk about it now.”
 “Slow down a bit. I’m trying to keep up.”
 “I just don’t want him to catch up with us.”
 “I just don’t want to lose you.”
 “That sounds heart-warming.”
 “I just mean that I don’t want to lose you in the crowd.”
 “You’re taking back your sentiment.”
 “No, that’s not what I mean. We just have to go.”
 “You seem a little cold.”
 “It’s not that. This is getting a little crazy. Let’s just get out of here.”
 “Where are we going to go?”
 “We could go back to my place.”
 “I thought that you said that it was weird there. I don’t want to put you in any danger.”
 “We’ll be OK there. You’re the one in danger.”
 “Are you married?”
 “What do you mean?”
 “You are acting funny. I almost think that you’re married.”
 “No.”
 “No. You have nothing more to say. Are you going with a girl?”
 “Not exactly.”
 “A man of mystery. I like mystery.”
 “You’re the one with the guy chasing you.”

"You aren't married?"

"Nothing like that at all."

"Tell me what then?"

"You're the one with the story."

"I want you to tell me what happened."

"I met this man. He introduced himself to me. He is very nice. He helped me. He found me a place to stay."

"Go on."

"At first I thought that he was being friendly. That he had no expectations of me. Nothing romantic. After all, he had a wife. But he was just setting me up. All along he had these plans."

"Did he force himself on you?"

"Not in the least. In fact, I was the one who started making advances. And he reminded me that he was married. He had only intended to help me."

"Did he help you?"

"Yes, he did what he could. He gave me a place to stay. He fed me."

"Was this in his house?"

"No, he had a separate apartment."

"A separate apartment."

"At first, I thought that this was a place that he brought girls to hide from his wife. But it wasn't like that at all."

"It did become like that?"

"It was a friend's place. That made it easy for him. And he left me alone. He didn't say anything. He wouldn't see me for days. He called to make sure that I was OK. Otherwise, he gave me free rein over the place."

"How long did that last?"

"A week. Maybe more."

"He left you alone all that time."

"No, he'd come to visit. But not for very long. He didn't feel too comfortable. And he didn't want to be away from his wife."

"Did it keep up like that?"

"No, he started to take more interest. And we started to do more things together. One night he slept over. He told me that he was too tired to drive home. He just crashed in the living room. I didn't think a thing about it."

"And then he came on to you."

"Not at all. I started to feel these things for him. We'd be together all this time. And then I wouldn't see him. And I'd start to miss him. I touched him just to remind myself that we were together. And it felt so good. It started to develop from there."

"Develop?"

"He kissed me once. Then he felt all guilty about it. I didn't see him for a few days. He didn't even call me."

"You were still in the apartment."

“That was the weird thing about it all. His friend never came back. And I started to have the suspicions again. That he just used the place for girls. But I knew that it wasn’t his place.”

“So what happened after that.”

“He came back. We stayed up really late one night. And he kissed me again. A long intense kiss. He fell asleep on the couch. Again, nothing else happened.”

“Strange!”

“What?”

“It really seems as if he planned this all. So subtly.”

“None of it was planned. It all just happened.”

“And then what?”

“I slept with him. And it started to be a regular thing. But he’d still have these guilt trips about his wife.”

“He was married.”

“I told you that before.”

“It wasn’t something that he made up.”

“He’d have no reason to make up something like that.”

“Go on with your story.”

“I really don’t want to go back to the center.”

“You just want to park on my couch for a while.”

“Is that a question or an offer?”

“I don’t know.”

“Maybe, I should just go.”

“Where are you going to go?”

“I’ve been on the street before.”

“What are you afraid of?”

“You’re the one who told me that it’s weird here.”

“How old are you?”

“I’m old enough to take care of myself. You like to ask a lot of questions.”

“You’re going to stay in my place. I just want to know who you are.”

“Are you coming on to me?”

“Not at all.”

“Do you find me attractive?”

“It’s not like that.”

“You’re blushing. Would you like to get together? We could hook up. There’s no one around.”

“Are you teasing me? Isn’t it dangerous just to come on to guys that you don’t know.”

“You have a nice face. You seem like someone that I can trust.”

“I don’t want to make this forever. Just until we can figure something out for you.”

“I don’t want to go back to that place.”

“Is this illegal?”

“It’s not like that. If they can’t find us, they can’t make me go back. Don’t worry! It’s not like I’m a minor. It’s just that I shouldn’t left like that.”

"I thought that you said that he was your guardian."

"Just legally. It's just part of the court thing."

"So this is technically against the law."

"It's not against the law. You're just giving me a place to stay. And I can just report to the center on my own. I don't have to live there."

"But you do have to go back."

"I just don't want them searching for me."

"We could go back tomorrow."

"Not now. Maybe another day. In a week. We can go back in a week."

"You promise?"

"So this is your place. Do you bring girls here?"

"It's not like that."

"You have brought girls here."

"I've been away for a while. I let a friend use my place. He's married. He told me that he needed a place to crash when he worked late and couldn't drive back to the suburbs."

"Are you married?"

"No. I told you."

"But your friend brings girls back here. That is weird."

"I never said that. I just said that I let him stay here while I was out of town. Nothing more than that."

"Do you want to have a little fun?"

"I should just leave you alone for a while."

"Are you going somewhere? I could come."

"I could stay with a friend. That way it wouldn't make you feel uncomfortable."

"I don't want to be alone. Just in case they find me."

"They don't know where you are."

"Maybe they followed us here."

"I am pretty sure that we lost them."

"I don't know why guys feel the need to make up stories. You know that they tell you that they are going to leave their wives. And young girls want to believe that shit. Or they don't want to believe it because they can't stand the idea of settling down with a guy like that."

"He'd tell you that he was going to leave his wife."

"He'd tell me more shit than that."

"Did you believe him?"

"I just liked the sex. And it gave him an excuse to keep me along. I figured that as long as this went on, I wouldn't have to work."

"Didn't you feel that you were losing your motivation?"

"It's not like I felt like a kept woman. This was just something that I was doing."

"But if it wasn't him, would it be some other guy?"

"It wasn't like that. He never gave me money for sex."

"Did he buy you things?"

"He realized that I really had no clothes. He helped me get straightened out. He liked the

idea. It made him feel like some kind of artist.”

“So that was the secret of the whole thing.”

“He liked the sex. I did things that his wife would never dream of. He wasn’t that old. But she was getting lazy.”

“But didn’t you have fears of ending up the same way.”

“I wasn’t in it for the long haul. I knew that when it started to get boring, I could just hop on a freight train and get out of that town.”

“I thought that he lived here.”

“He does. That’s just a way of speaking.”

“Have you seen him since?”

“He saw me in the street. He tried to follow me. But he couldn’t keep up.”

“I haven’t seen you since high school. How have you been?”

“I’ve been good.”

“You look great. Is something wrong?”

“There’s this guy that I’m trying to get away from.”

“Angela, I never imagined that you’d be running from some guy.”

“Believe me, I never thought that either. Things just happened. It all got out of control. I had to leave. I couldn’t even take anything. All that I had were the clothes on my back.”

“You have to come back to my place.”

“I thought that you were married.”

“I’m seeing this guy. But I have my own place. I’ve got an extra room.”

“I don’t want to impose. My sister lives in St. Louis.”

“How far is Saint Louis from here? A thousand miles. You’re not going there tonight.”

“I don’t want to impose.”

“It’s not an imposition. I even have some clothes that you can wear. We’re the same size, aren’t we?”

“I can’t.”

“Don’t give me that look. I haven’t gained weight, have I?”

“That’s not what I mean.”

“What are you telling me?”

“I just hate taking over your life.”

“I’m just letting you wear my clothes. I’m not going to let you sleep with my lover.”

“What?”

“That was a joke. Besides, my man is a great guy. You have nothing to be afraid of.”

“So you are going to get married.”

“I really don’t think that he’s the one. It just seems right for now.”

“Oh!”

“How did you find me?”

“It was an accident. I just saw you on the street like that.”

“What were you going to do if you didn’t find me.”

“I have no earthly idea. But now you’re here.”

“You were the one trying to run away.”

“Vanessa, I just don’t want to come back to you like this.

“Don’t be silly.”

“What’s your guys’s name?”

“Ray.”

“That’s strange. I’m trying to get away from a Ray. It can’t be the same guy.”

“My guy is out of town.”

“I wish my Ray was long gone. I wish that I could have taken my stuff before I got out.”

“We can go to the store tomorrow. For tonight, I’ve got loads of stuff for you. I want you to stay as long as you need to so that you can get on your feet again.”

“You seem too kind.”

“It’s not just kindness. It’s loyalty!”

“It was so strange that she invited me back to her place.”

“What do you mean?”

“She had no idea that I was sleeping with her lover.”

“What?”

“It was the one and the same. He had told her that he was going out of town. But he never left. And then we had the blow out.”

“I thought that you hadn’t seen her in years.”

“I hadn’t. But we were best friends in college. And it’s so weird. She did something very similar to that to me while we were in high school. There was this guy that I liked. I can’t remember his name. But she wanted him. Just to spite me.”

“And you stayed friends.”

“We weren’t friends then. But we met each other again when we were away at college. For some reason, she had forgotten about the whole thing.”

“But you still remembered.”

“Remembered. I couldn’t forget.”

“So you plotted revenge?”

“No, that just happened. By the weirdest coincidence. When I realize what was going on, I didn’t want to see her. I couldn’t.”

“But you took a secret delight in the fact that you were getting her back.”

“No at all. I’m an adult now. I felt more embarrassed. I think that’s why Ray and I finally had that blow out fight. And then he just threw me out.”

“So you decided to find her.”

“I really had nowhere else to go.”

“But you knew that he was going to come back.”

“I want you to meet someone. This is Ray.”

“Hello, I’m Vanessa.”

“Vanessa, you look like you’ve see a ghost.”

“Great to meet you, Vanessa.”

“Vanessa and I went to college together.”

“And she’s visiting.”

“Not exactly. She was going with this guy. And he threw her out. I just happened to see

her on the street. It was this weird coincidence.”

“Very weird.”

“So Ray, what do you do?”

“I’m a lawyer. But I am also involved in some real estate development.”

“Ray is talking about getting into politics.”

“Angela, I always thought that you were perfect for politics.”

“I’m more of a gentle soul. I don’t have the hard will that you need for politics. Vanessa, you seemed to be more of a chameleon.”

“You’re not calling me sleazy, are you?”

“Not at all. Vanessa was always so outgoing. She knew all these guys. And I was so shy.”

“Vanessa, are you working?”

“Not now. I’m looking for something. Maybe you could help me. I was an administrative assistant in a law office.”

“Ray told me that there was an opening at his firm.”

“Honey, that job may not be right for Vanessa.”

“Nonsense. You have to help her out. She’d do the same for me.”

“I’m sure that she would.”

“So she never suspected anything.”

“There was nothing to suspect. I just needed a job. He was a little resistant at first. Then he decided to help you out.”

“He got you the job.”

“Yeah. I thought that he didn’t like me. But he wanted to be nice to Angela. So he did what he could for me. He even helped me find a new apartment.”

“But he didn’t come on to you.”

“He really didn’t trust me. I don’t know if Angela had said something about me. He was helpful. But a little distant.”

“And that coldness eventually subsided.”

“Not at first. I even confronted him.”

“Ray, do you have something against me?”

“No. Why do you feel that?”

“Ever since I showed up, you’ve treated me strangely. I want to be your friend.”

“I guess I’m just a hard guy to get to know.”

“That shouldn’t stop us from getting to know each other.”

“No, it shouldn’t. We could go get a drink together.”

“Out of the blue, he just said that.”

“It wasn’t such a big deal. We were working in the same office.”

“But he wanted to have a drink with you alone.”

“Angela, was working late. It simply wasn’t a big deal.”

“So you went for a drink.”

"I did. But I felt strange all the time. There was something really freaky about him. It was as if he became someone else once he smelled the alcohol on my breath."

"He made a pass at you."

"Not exactly. He gave me these seductive looks. But he didn't say anything."

"And that was that?"

"He did try to grasp my hand at one point. But then he pretended that nothing happened. So I didn't think a thing about it."

"That was that."

"I caught him staring at my legs. I had on a short skirt. And as I sat down, it rode up my legs. But nothing else. Really, nothing else."

"Did he have trouble relating to you?"

"I just felt that he wanted to say more."

"So the alcohol seemed to hold him back."

"Something held him back."

"And that was that."

"For the time being!"

"Let me buy drinks for you and your companion."

"How can you tell that I'm with someone?"

"I can't. I'm covering all my bases. If you are with someone, then I don't seem to be a jerk who's just coming on to you since I've bought you both a drink"

"So are you coming on to me?"

"I don't know. How do you want it to be."

At that moment, my fiancé returned to the table.

"I didn't catch your name."

"Ray."

"Honey, this is Ray. He's bought drinks for both of us."

My man looks uncomfortable, but he tries to play the sport. He tries to catch Ray off guard.

"Ray, what do you do?"

Ray ignores his question and continues to stare at me. My fiancé tries to throw him off, Ray turns to him,

"Is the drink OK?"

"Yeah, it's great."

Ray realizes that he has to work fast. And he is working. I hate to admit it. But I am going along.

"She's a great girl." He is talking about me. My fiancé is taken aback. He has no idea what to say.

"Whatever."

He has tried to deflect Ray's remark. But it comes out as an insult to me.

"Lighten up. You're being a creep."

"Ray, I'd prefer if you go now. Angela and I have something to discuss in private."

"If you want me to go, I'll go."

I apologize for the rudeness, “I want you to stay. You’ve been a gracious host to us.”

“Honey, let’s get out of here.”

I am not ready to leave. I find Ray’s brashness refreshing.

“Angela, I’m not going to stand for this kind of shit. You are embarrassing me. We don’t even know who is this guy.”

I hold my ground. After a while I find that I’m alone with Ray.

“He’s really a nice guy. He’s just had a bad day. I think that he was getting a little defensive.”

“Maybe you should have left with him. It does look bad.”

“He’s never been like that before. I don’t want to make excuses for him. I really love him.”

“You should have left with him.”

“Now, you’re taking his side. Don’t you see how he made me feel. Like a zero. Like I don’t have an opinion of my own.”

“You’re right. But sometimes it’s just better to swallow your pride. It’s part of being together.”

“You’re suddenly understanding. Why didn’t you just back off when you saw that things were getting testy.”

“That would have meant that I’d have to quit talking to you. It’s just that I really find you attractive. That’s why I approached you in the first place.”

“I am engaged. Although I’m not sure what’s going on after this.”

He is staring in my eyes. I want him to kiss me so badly. The smart thing would be to just go immediately. I wonder why I was so ready to sacrifice my fiancé for this. Ray has been more than good.

“You do this sort of thing all the time.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Picking up girls in bars.”

“Are you calling me a whore?”

“I’m not sure what to call you. But this comes too easily for you.”

After this mess, I can’t go back to my fiancé tonight. I know that if I don’t go home to him, that we’ll break up. It’s bizarre how our lives can come down to one silly moment. I feel the deck of cards crashing around me. I never thought that things were so screwed up.

“You don’t feel guilty in the least.”

“For what?”

“For the break up.”

“I was trying to be friendly.”

“How did you know that it would happen like this?”

“You seem to be ignored.”

“I wasn’t being ignored. He had just gone to the bathroom.”

“But you were fidgeting in your seat. There was already something troubling you.”

“It’s not as if you can read minds. I had a bad day at work.”

“But you let it get to you.”

“And if I go home with you, what does that mean?”

“I didn’t ask you back to my place.”

“You might as well have asked.”

“I’m not the sort of guy to make promises. I come here to have a little fun. After that you really can’t expect that much more.”

“But I do expect more. I’m not the sort of girl who’s just going to go home with a guy that she meets in a bar. Who knows what’s wrong with you?”

“You could have left when you had the chance.”

“I still can leave. It’s not as if you are holding me here.”

“But you are curious.”

“You know what they say about curiosity.”

“I’m not sure. I haven’t heard you purr yet.”

“Is that an invitation?”

“It’s what you make of it.”

“Now, you’re sending it back in my court.”

“You’re definitely breaking up with him.”

“Do I have a choice?”

“You’ve got a cell phone. You could apologize.”

“And crawl back to him. That’s not really my style.”

“Do you hate him that much? He really had no choice but to leave. He was testing you out. To see if you’d follow him.”

“He made me look like a fool.”

“But I challenged him. The only other choice would have been for him to try to fight me.”

“Would that have impressed you?”

“It would have embarrassed me more.”

“So.”

“Now I have an excuse.”

“For what.”

“For destroying my plans. For wrecking up my life just royally.”

“It doesn’t have to be that bad. Maybe they were bad plans.”

“But they were my plans.”

“You’ve got a phone. You can change things right now.”

“You’ve got a bed. We could change things right now.”

“It’s not as if I’m putting words in your mouth.”

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

“But you’re saying that it’s working.”

“Like a charm. From the moment that you sat down with us. You had an agenda. And you never let up.”

“I impressed you.”

“Not totally. But you knew what you were doing.”

“He should have held his ground.”

“He did. You were the one who embarrassed him.”

“He deserved it.”

“OK, he learned a little lesson. Now you can call him.”

“Are you telling me that you don’t have what it takes? You come on to a girl. Then you don’t have what it takes.”

“It’s not as if I want to have sex with you in the washroom.”

“Although you’re not above that sort of thing.”

“I wouldn’t mind getting your number and seeing you sometime. Maybe for dinner.”

“You think that I like to admit to my mistakes. I don’t want to open my psychology to you. I was thinking more of an anger fuck.”

“That really doesn’t sound that romantic.”

“Maybe, it’s a little more exciting.”

“I’m not what you take me for. I wasn’t here to destroy your life.”

“But you did.”

“If it was broken, I didn’t make it that way.”

“Is that what you tell all the girls.”

“I don’t spend my time picking up girls in bars.”

“But if you succeed, you’re not going to turn your nose up for a good screw.”

“I do try to be a little more loving than that.”

“Is that a challenge? I’m going to put my hand down your pants, and if you get hard, then I’ll go home with you.”

“Who says that I’ll go home with you. Was that a little trick that you learned in a movie?”

“I like your trick better. But you have to have money. You’re just not buying two drinks, you’re buying three.”

“Do you want another drink?”

“You’ve already succeeded. I want to go home with you.”

“That’s not me.”

“You can’t get it hard.”

“You’re being a little brutal with me.”

“Are you married? Is that the problem?”

“Are you sure that you want to do this thing? It’s not something that you dabble at. You’re going to feel guilty about this. I know.”

“And you don’t want to deal with that chick stuff, do you?”

“I just came out for a fun night. Nothing too heavy.”

“Let’s have some fun! Buy me that drink. After a few, I’ll forget about the problem.”

Now the case will be investigated by the relevant authorities.