

5. VANESSA

I need to get away for a while. I head to the islands for some relaxation. The ocean is perfectly calm. I become attached to the feelings of serenity.

I have sworn off guys for a while. And I really wonder if I really need them at all. I have found an inner perfection that accords with the surrounding environment. I have merged with sand and sea. I am that eternity where they meet.

The whole sexual thing just seems like some kind of grotesque interruption. It is like a storm on the ocean. Totally unwanted, a disturbance.

It is the evening. The sunset is engrossing. I sit on a relaxing chair and absorb it all. Nothing could be lovelier.

How have I pushed myself to this point? I have been an addict. I don't want to blame it on work. But maybe I needed the balance to hold me together. Now I have just let it go, and it is so wonderful.

Any sorrows that might have touched me are a thing of the past. My soul floats in the grandeur.

At dinner, there is a guy eyeing me. He tries to effect that nonchalance that is so familiar in these parts. But he has it all wrong. He's after one thing. He doesn't know how to be mystical about this place. He bothers me.

He is a little relentless. He buys me a drink and tries to hang around my table. I just want him to fly away somewhere. Be off!

I never thought that I could be this way. Even my resting moments only seemed like a preparation for tempestuous passions. Things have been turned around completely. It is indeed pleasant.

I want to make sense of the philosophy. These turbulent energies have carried me along to a physical paradise. Even as I accommodate myself to one level of pleasure, a new one emerges. I am always pushing myself. There is this internal struggle. I let myself go, and I get pulled along. An explosion. I project out of myself. I am another person. What does it all mean?

Here, the conflict is ended. That contradiction which has torn at my being is left behind on the mainland. I don't even want to revisit it. I want things to remain like this.

I am faced with the impossibility of my new lifestyle. Does it exist simply on the basis of my denial of self. Or more appropriately, a total acceptance of the self. Such a tact is never possible in the realm of desire. Perhaps desire has opened up these heights, and now I soar off into the wind.

Will it get any better?

I am on the verge of tears as I try to contain the extreme. I am about to burst with the joy. I lie back and let it draw me in. There is no hesitation.

After a week like this, I wonder how I can return to my former self. I feel that a wound has healed. If I go back, the world will only tear at me. It will reignite the pain. I can't have that.

It is my last night. I drink a little too much to help preserve that feeling. I can sense this man draw me on. My body opens to him naturally. There is no game in any of this.

I have become lost in my imagination as I pass out on the bed. I feel that I have been delivered back to the world of pleasure. I fear that I will have to return to my old ways. I will seek the healing sensations that have lulled my imagination.

I leave my spirit and return to the world of the body.

I meet Vanessa through work. She is property manager of a series of apartment complexes. She sees this as a step to becoming a mogul in her own right. She is even more driven than I am. She comes by the office in the hopes of us doing some contracts for her.

She has that walk, and every guy has his eyes on her as she moves through our floor.

“Can I get you something?”

“A bottled water would be fine.”

“You work out, don’t you?”

“Religiously.”

I almost feel this attraction for her. I can tell something is going on. She loves to play. One of the junior partners is eyeing her, and she is playing along. He imagine his hand sliding along the back of her leg. She stands taller as if she is purring. He gives her that nod. It is almost as if he is already inside her. She moves her head slightly to accompany his fantasy. He gets lost in the rhythmic motion. Just as he is engrossed by the feeling, she abruptly tosses him aside. She lets another guy complete the experience.

“I saw that.”

“What are you talking about?”

“The Vulcan mind meld, or whatever you call it.”

“That was nothing.”

“If that was nothing, I’d really like to see you in action.”

She pretends that I’m coming on to her.

“You’re a player too.”

“No, I’m just observant.”

She invites me to have a drink with her. I want to see what goes on in her familiar watering hole.

“You come her all the time.”

“When I need to rejuvenate myself. But all these guys seem like such amateurs.”

I want to see her work. I hardly realize that she has already made short work over a bunch.

“There’s an art to this.”

I feel a little miffed that she is trying to school me. Perhaps, my time on the island has softened my edge.

“Where are you going after this?”

“I have an early morning.”

“We could go dancing.”

“I’m a little bored with dance clubs. The guys there just assume that they have all the right moves. It’s really an embarrassment.”

“Come along with me. I know a great place.”

I trust her.

The decor is like all the places that I’ve seen before. The flashing lights, the gaudy

furniture. An attempt at art deco.

She hooks one of the habitues. She demonstrates her skills for me on the couch. I wonder what I am doing here.

“I brought you here to watch.”

“Are you going to take me home to watch as well.”

“You could play along if you like.”

“I really don’t need any help.”

“I could show you some things.”

“That’s really not my style.”

Her lithe body has such appeal for me. She is like an acrobat. She can contort her leg behind her head. I love how limber she is. It all seems to beckon me. I don’t understand my place. But I want to be part of it.

I leave her to her man.

“We’ll get together another time.”

“You must stay. He likes you.”

At home I am restless. I don’t realize what has happened. Everything was so perfect on the islands. I was able to ignore sex. But now desire is ripping me apart. I really didn’t want her at all. I just wanted that infinite possibility that she seemed to suggest.

I have trouble sleeping. I should have accompanied. Then I could have settled down.

In response to it all, I try to live an ascetic. I have sworn off men for the time being. I exercise a little more than usual. I want that facility that Vanessa has. I feel it like a competition. In some ways, she is compensating for lesser talents than mine. And she is willing to surrender herself so easily. I find that I am a much choosier.

She seems to be part of a secret society. Just vague suggestions. But I surmise that she has compatriots who are all willing to engage in the same kind of pursuit. There appears to be a freedom in it all. I want to know more. I have really become distracted.

“You have to come over for a visit.”

“You’re not going to drop me in the middle of an orgy.”

“Just us girls.”

I almost envision her coming on to me. I enjoy the fantasy. She has opened my dress, and her caresses move up my body. She has no shame. Her tongue has no bounds. She alternates rhythmic kisses with this lapping motion of the tongue. It is such a turn on. My whole body is coming alive. I have never known anything this intense. There is almost an element of pain in it all. Like little pinpricks on the skin.

The excitement grows. I am engrossed by it all.

She has worked her way under my panties. Now her face is buried in my pussy. I have never done this with a woman. She understands ways that stimulate better than any guy. It is perfection in itself.

I feel so turned on. I need to quit giving in to the fantasy. If I go over there, I promise that there will be no sex.

Her body has burned this image on my brain. I have difficulty trying to get over it. I want to recollect my last time with a man. It seems like ages ago.

I plan on meeting her after dinner. I try to catch the eyes of some man in the restaurant.

There are all couples there. Even though they are engrossed in their women, they still tease with me. That is all. I feel that I could be taken right here, right now, if just one would respond. It does not happen.

“Here is your check, Madam.”

I snap out of it.

I head to a nearby bar for a drink. Then I am ready to face her.

Vanessa hugs me as I come in. My body tingles. She lives a little far out in one of the new subdivisions. Her home is immaculate. A playground.

Vanessa leads me to her entertainment room. It has a massive TV and great speakers. In the middle of the room all these ropes are hanging from the ceiling. It looks like a tightrope.

She point to it, “This is my job now. I sell these.”

“What is this, an adult swing set?”

“You hang up in the air so he can administer the ultimate pleasure to you.”

“Frankly, Vanessa, it looks like a torture device.”

“With pleasure there is always an element of pain.”

“You really like that perverse sort of shit.”

“This is completely natural.”

“Of course it is.”

There is something rather shocking about this, even for me. Sure I like the abrasive honest attitude about the whole thing. But it is also slightly psycho. It seems to challenge the women’s consent. She is just placed in this device which really doesn’t allow her any freedom.

“Have you used this thing?”

“It’s great. You don’t know what you’re missing. It feels so comfortable.”

“And when he wants to share himself with you, does he hang from a set of rings?”

“No, you can just lower this down on the bed. It’s so relaxing.”

“I think it’s crazy. I imagine the police would get a kick out of something like this. They can hang a suspect in the air until he begs for mercy.”

“That’s not what it’s meant for. You can even be suspended upside down.”

“I didn’t know the circus had finally come to town. Are you telling me that you show this kind of thing to your friends? They must think that you are a real nut job.”

“They all love it. I’ve sold a bunch of them. There’s nothing wrong with saying what you want.”

“Vanessa, there’s one thing in asking for something. There’s quite another in getting everything that you ask for. I sort of want a little ambiguity in the answer. It’s OK to be playful and naughty. But this is just mechanical. Slam, bam, thank you, mam. It might as well be a machine.”

“Isn’t that what you want, Liz? A machine that you can turn on and off. Isn’t that what really turns you on?”

“And you want me to help you sell these things?”

“If that’s what you want.”

“Have you ever been to the factory? There is a factory?”

“Of course there is. It’s in Minnesota. I’ve never been there.”

I keep wondering if this is what I've become. Has my transformation been so complete into a machine for pleasure? I've worked to deny everything that I am. I like my safety. I feel protected. I don't want to open myself any more than I do. That is sufficient intimacy for me.

"You have to become part of this. You don't know how it will change you. We can use it now."

"Are you coming on to me, Vanessa?"

She averts my eyes.

"I was just going to demonstrate it for you. Nothing more!"

"Is this like using the swing set at the park?"

She laughs. I deftly avoid following through with her invitation.

"Let's go have a drink."

I feel a little of the tension has subsided. I become more at ease.

Vanessa tells me her story:

I was with this guy. We were the perfect pair. Both workaholics. And we played hard too

I'm at the gym one day. Peter can't make it. This one guy is spotting me on the weights. Afterwards, he catches up with me.

"You want to go out?"

"I'm actually dating someone."

"We could be friends. I'd be there for you if you ever decided to break up with him."

We both laugh. He tries to convince me. But I refuse to take his number. I figure that is that. But I keep seeing him at the gym. And he helps me out when I'm by myself.

"At least come with me for a cup of coffee."

I'm sure that even Peter wouldn't mind. This guy's name is Bill. And Bill has the most wondrous eyes. Lovely blue. And he just stares at me.

"Stop staring. It's not polite."

"I can't help it. I've already had these crazy fantasies about you."

"I told you that I'm with someone. You can't give in to those kinds of thoughts."

"I can't help it."

It is affecting me a little. When I'm making love with Peter that night, I briefly think about Bill. But I catch myself.

"Are you OK, honey? You seem a little weird."

"I had a long day."

He accepts my explanation.

About a week later, I go out for a drink with Bill. Peter and I have been together since college. I love his body. But Bill seems more dangerous. I like the risk.

I am messing up the perfect thing.

Nothing really happens at the bar. But Bill has been feeding me compliments all evening. I am already late and will need to explain thing to Peter. At the car, Bill brushes my arm. I lean over to kiss him, then I catch myself. "I can't do this. No, I can't."

I speed away. At home, I am full of conflict. I can't make love to Peter.

"Is something bothering you?"

"Nothing really."

I remember Bill's words, "You're a lovely girl. You have such talent. You can't afford to waste it on one man. There are things that you don't know. Being with one man makes you prudish. You hold back from true exploration."

I feel that he is right. I want to discover the mystery. I have a good job. A stable life. But I am being offered so much more.

Bill has been able to appeal to what was always a weakness in my life. I doubted my body. At that point, I really hadn't stretched out. I am in pretty good shape. But not truly competitive. Billy seems to offer a little more to me. I welcome that.

So I wouldn't give in, I start to exercise even more. It becomes a particular irritant that Peter doesn't even notice me. But so be it. If that's how things are, I will deal with it.

I need an outlet.

When Peter goes away for business, I agree to meet Bill for dinner. He realizes the opportunity and gives it the full court press. I resist but get lost in imagining his kiss. I don't give in.

At home, I wonder if I could have followed through. Just thinking about it has made me a guilty girl. I look at my naked body in the mirror and wonder if there is something wrong with me. There isn't, but I notice these defects. I push myself harder in my exercise routine. I suffer at work.

When Peter returns, I promise to turn over a new leaf. I do everything that I can to oblige him. He has become more experimental, but the sex just seems pedestrian to me. This is awful. And Bill hasn't stopped his advances!

I feel that I have been a good girl by resisting. How long can I last? It's not as if Bill and I share that much in common. But the mystery of sex is pulling me. I've done all this before. Peter is really a better catch. Things are getting really crazy.

I need something to distract me. Work just isn't doing it. And exercise only make me want to venture out more. Where do I go?

"Let's rent a movie," I tell Bill.

Someone recommends this really exotic picture. I love the extravagant visuals. And the characters are so appealing. This is the romance that I need. I look over at Peter, and he has fallen asleep.

This hardly sends me in the arms of Bill. I begin to feel all men are like this. Faceless droids who care little about the finer things in life. After work, I head off for a drink on my own.

There is a guy at the bar who seems taken by the new me. We joke and laugh. No strings attached. I am loving it. He invites me to dinner.

"I've really got to go."

I call Peter and get no answer. I head for dinner with my new found friend.

He tries to be a gentleman, but he undresses me with his eyes at dinner. All the while, he is telling me about the new accounts that he has snagged.

"They are sending me to Budapest next month."

"How romantic!"

"I could take you along for a little Hungarian romance."

I laugh.

"I'm with a guy."

“Really,” he taunts me. “I don’t see him here.”

I have to admit that neither do I.

For some reason, I end up back at his apartment. We are on his couch, and he starts to caress my arm.

“I really do have to go.”

When I get home, Peter is nowhere around. I am a little pissed that I put myself out so much. I think that feeling stays with me. I finally give in to Bill. We make out in his car when it’s parked by the gym. I go home with him that night. I mean to leave about 11 or so. But I sleep through the night.

I have difficulty coming up with an explanation for Peter. He tries to let it slide, but the disgust is brewing.

“What is going on between us? We hardly ever sleep together.”

“You’re away on business all the time.”

He feels that it’s his fault, and does everything that he can to patch things up. It doesn’t work.

I keep seeing Bill. But he really has nothing for me. I realize that it isn’t him at all. It’s the adventure of sex. First, it’s guys that I meet all the time. Later, I want more. I want people who want to explore that darker side. Anything goes. That’s what made me the way I am.

Vanessa finishes her story. Her darker side seems to have always been part of her nature. That is why she picked Peter. He offered discipline to her. It helped her to suppress that side of herself. But when he left, she went a little nuts. It was all part of her nature.

Vanessa has more to tell me.

“We play these games. Adult versions of spin the bottle. We pick straws, and the losing girl has to get naked. And we all have to lick her pussy. Sort of a pussy party. It’s a blast.”

“I’m not really into multiple partners. I don’t do female tricks.”

“There’s nothing real. It’s just a game. It’s fun. We all laugh.”

“Is it all girls?”

“No, couples.”

“So do you suck the guys off?”

“That would get too involved. You know an ego thing. But we might do some strange stuff in private. Couple swaps. Threesomes and foursomes. Tag team. Whatever goes.”

“And you like this kind of thing. It doesn’t make you feel cheap or dirty.”

“All the dudes are buff. All the girls are hot.”

“I can’t imagine this at all.”

I feel as if I have no dark secrets that I am hiding. I’ve loved the adventure. But not this way. It all seems so artificial. As if you need a machine just to get you off.

“I can’t play.”

“Come along to watch. You’ll have a blast.”

I feel hesitant. That night I have a sex dream with Vanessa in it. It is with another guy. I feel so rested afterwards.

I agree to go to one of the parties. She promises that no one will get naked. No shenanigans.

Everything seems pretty tame. Just some chips and dip. Drinks. Professional people. There is a porno playing on the TV. But that is all.

A guy approaches, "Did Vanessa tell you about us?"

I am a little afraid. "Are you going to bite me or something?"

"We're not vampires."

"You don't do ritual sacrifice?" I am half-kidding. He laughs.

"Come upstairs. We could have some fun."

Not really. Things are a little too easy for me.

I find Vanessa, "Is this one of your pussy parties?"

"I was teasing you with all that."

"So what goes on upstairs?"

"There are sex enactments. Fantasy games. And in some rooms sex with multiple partners. But you don't have to go up there."

I feel that none of this is for me. I find a way to excuse myself and leave.

At home, I find that my fantasy has subsided. Sure the adventure had its appeal. But I am not Vanessa. She worked her way up to that point. It became part of her. It is not something for dabblers.

The next time that I see Vanessa, she tries to entice me: "That guy that you were talking to was fantastic. I went upstairs with him and another girl. We must have been in there for three hours. I've never seen such magnificent staying power."

"So it did it for you."

"Yeah!"

She is leaving me cold with her story. I am polite. I feel that I am swearing off sex.

"Let's go have some dinner. It will perk you up."

She is right. My appetite is stronger than usual. And the meal really is appealing. She outlines her thoughts on sex while we have a rare dessert.

"I don't think that we're meant to be with one lover. It's not natural. It leads to possessiveness and heartache."

A lot of what she says appeals to what I've thought all along.

"But you're assuming that the only reason that you chose a lover is for sex."

If you want a friend, find a friend. But once you sleep with him, you know how the dynamic changes. He starts assuming all these things. That's just not for me.

"If you find a good lover, isn't it best to hang on to him?"

"That's easier said than done. If he realizes that he's good, he's going to be always looking for the perfect situation to acknowledge his skill. And that may mean that he's already engaged in a little extra-curricular. You just can't let yourself get caught flat-footed."

There's something a little scary about this picture. It means that I have to be on my game all the time. I feel that pressure.

She continues, "If it becomes too much for you, just back off for a while. It's not like you have any obligations to anyone. That's the nice thing about it all."

"I think that I'm a little afraid of being alone."

"We all are. But it ends up that way in the end. So why fight it? Just move on when you can."

“Do you ever sleep with the same guy more than once?”

“Sure. But I have others going on as well. I just give no one my soul. Not anymore.”

“Don’t you just hold something back in love-making?”

“To the contrary, I don’t have any fears of someone controlling me. I can be totally free.”

I want to believe her. I have been thinking that way myself. But when I hear her say it, it doesn’t make as much sense. I look at her. She seems more frenzied than free.

I review her theory of the sex party. It is meant to create that split between desire and pleasure. Desire focuses the application of the pleasure principle. It is ultimately an abstraction, a representation of real pleasure. In the actual circumstances, the self cannot remain intact. It becomes overwhelmed by its desires. There is this swirl of pleasure.

Vanessa expounds on these ideas, “The body has these forces that govern its integrity. But the unity of the self is an impediment to true pleasure. You have to let go. That is why the multiple partners is such a breakthrough. There is no longer a focus on the ego. It’s just the sensations for their own sake. It’s wonderful. I leave so refreshed.”

I wonder how she can function under the circumstances. Is this what I have become? Only my vacation has offered another view of things.

She reminds me, “You’ve got to know that we are sexual beings. It’s our nature. You can’t deny your orgasms. I know how religion attempts to discipline women. It really can’t be done. We are born to have fun. To live out our fantasies. When you understand, it is not fantasy at all. It is the reality underneath appearances.”

I want to keep up with her. She is now moving so fast. I can only take it slowly. I want something more substantial.

“Do you want a permanent lover? That is death. You will never be able to abide by it.”

I think that she likes to taunt me.

At home that night, I think about what Vanessa has told me. She has used this subtle brainwashing technique on me. She wanted me to think of myself like her. And I have. I have thought about her early years and the dissolution of her relationship with Peter. I could understand the appeals of Bill. I could feel the temptation drift over me.

Once she had convinced me of her story, it was only a short step to get taken in by the method. All the while, she was trying to seduce me. She had done that time and time again. I was almost easy prey.

All my experience with guys had not prepared me for her wile. I want to go back to her party. I want to get taken up the stairs.

I have a violent nightmare. I have followed through with the fantasy. Now I am tied down. All her coven penetrate. It does not stop.

There is something really weird about Vanessa. It didn’t start with Bill. There is another story. I feel that I am starting to visit that story myself. I can feel her psychology merge with mine. Sure I was under the strange influence of my mother. But that seemed occasional. Vanessa has attempted to influence me completely. This is total.

She pressures me to come to another party. I do everything that I can to resist. I love the game. But this is all too easy. I am not a submissive. And there is really nothing to dominate these pathetic creatures.

“It’s not about the personality, my dear. It’s about the technique.”

“But it is about the contest. And you have sapped the will by the method.

“You don’t understand in the least.”

But I have seen this before. It exchanges one form of slavery for another. There is a guy at the party who seems to be a novice.

“I really don’t like these psycho-games. Let’s go back to my hotel for a drink.”

Is he a plant on her part? The so-called initiate who appears just like me. But back at his hotel room, he will reveal even more bizarre proclivities.

I agree to have a drink back at the hotel bar. This seems like a waste of time.

“I’m not really into the silliness either.”

“What drew you there?”

“I was doing business with Vanessa. She invited me to an event.”

“Did she warn you?”

“I had some idea.”

“Were you buying one of her contraptions?”

“Oh that! No, I was working on a real estate deal. She really has a lot of friends who like those games.”

“Lost souls.”

“I guess so.”

He invites me up to his room. I pass.

“I’m not that easy.”

“I didn’t say that you were. I just thought that you might want to unwind. I could give you a massage.”

I feel a little tense, but I can tell where this is going. I have enjoyed my solitude. What will it take to get me back in the contest?

I hear from Vanessa one last time. She is considering leaving town. I meet her for drinks at a local bar.

“What happened to your coven?”

“Quit teasing me!”

“I just don’t see any delight in being hung up in the air naked while unknown strangers dip their snouts in my pussy.”

“It’ll give you a real charge. You have to try it.”

Ironically at this moment, a guy approaches us. Vanessa perks up with the attention. He appears to address himself to me, “Are you a dog person or a cat person?”

“Are you asking if I purr or if I bark after sex?”

As he walks away, Vanessa tries to console me, “He wasn’t such a bad looker.”

“He was a loser!” I am sure that she was counting on a threesome. She still hasn’t seen me naked. It would have been her treat.

“You’re so tight. It is going to be the death of you.”

“Vanessa, I am not going to give in that easily. He’s a jerk.”

“In the dark, it’s all the same.”

“I’m not like you.”

“Are you calling me a whore?”

“I have my share of lovers. But I’m a little more choosy.”

“A guy’s a guy. They all have the same thing.”

“Yeah, but some are much better at using it.”

“The weak can be taught.”

This seems to be leading nowhere. She talks about heading to San Francisco.

“It’s so much more exciting there. People are free.”

I’m not sure if she really understands the meaning of freedom. It’s more of this random exchange on her part. No good will ever come of it.

“Vanessa, have you ever thought of settling down?”

“I wondered the same thing about you. That’s why I thought you would have been the perfect candidate.”

“You just make sex so mechanistic. Just all these holes to plug.”

“It’s not really like that.”

“But it seems that way.”

Indeed it does. I am making little headway. I’m never going to see it her way.

“Just get a little drunk. You won’t know the difference.”

I’m usually much more aware in the pleasure game. Vanessa seems much more random than I am. That’s why I’ve always been more careful. I guess I’ll rethink things if I get more reckless.

As the night wears on, Vanessa argues for her belief in this spiritual component to her sexual quest. It does remind me of my time in the islands. But everything that she says contradicts what I say.

She is a little tipsy by the end of the night. She wants me to leave her in the bar. I see her leave with our animal lover. His line really didn’t go to waste.