

## 8. NAKED TRUTHS

“Christy, weren’t you working in a massage parlor?”

“It was a shitty job. But it wasn’t quite that bad?”

“How did that story get around?”

“Some guy that I know went to a massage parlor. And he saw some girl who looked just like me. And he was a little pissed off with me. So he spread this rumor about me.”

“That is pretty messed up!”

“I know! It’s bad enough having to deal with all that crap at the restaurant. But I’m not some kind of whore.”

“If only there was some way to expose guys like that for what they are.”

“It’s sick how he tried to drag you down to his level.”

“He was the one desperate enough to end up at a massage parlor.”

“I wish that there was some kind of freak show mirror that showed guys like that for who they really are.”

“I sort of imagine x-ray glasses that would show pretty much the same thing.”

“Even though we could use those glasses, it’s not as if we’d pay a cent to see a guy that way.”

“Not like a guy who’d give his fortune to see a girl spread her legs at a strip club.”

“It gets me thinking that all guys are perverts.”

“A pretty crazy thing to think about someone.”

“Don’t you think that I’m right?”

“I’m not sure that I want to go that far.”

“You wear a short skirt to the office, and guys are staring at you all day. You don’t see a guy in a new suit and fantasize about him. Especially when he’s screaming at you to get your work done.”

“Is it the same at the restaurant?”

“You dress nice to get tips. Guys give you a few extra bucks, and they think that they own you.”

“And then they spread rumors about you.”

“Do you know what some guy told me the other day? If I lost some weight, I might be able to get some guy to fuck me. This guy should take a long look in the mirror. It’s not as if the women are lining up to give him the time of day.”

“That they’re not doing.”

“What a roaster!”

“Someone needs to shove an apple in that guy’s mouth.”

“Where do they get the nerve?”

“I’d like to see one of those monsters on stage for half a second.”

“Only if we could lob rotten fruit at them.”

“I was thinking of something stinkier.”

“How do they get away with that?”

“I want to say because we take it. But if we dish it out, they only get more foul.”

“We could just get a scalpel and cut it off.”

“Not very pleasant!”

“Definitely within our rights.”

“Tell that to some judge.”

“A big bloated guy.”

Christy is worn out from a long day at the restaurant. The only way to unwind is to get deep into her thoughts. She contemplates what separates her from a world of flattery. She does what she can to play the game. But each lewd comment has its impact. She has trouble absorbing the damage. It's not as if she's overly-sensitive. She just doesn't see herself as the target for assholes. Her job puts her on the front lines of such nastiness. It's not as if she is completely helpless to ward off the negativity. She does what she can to rise above her detractors. They have no idea who she really is. She fashions a world where she cannot be touched by the dark cloud.

How can some girls live off their image? They have to recognize that a major part of the reactions to them are not pleasant. Nevertheless, they seem to tour the limelight as if nothing is happening. How can they fight off the feeling just to give up? They have to be mesmerized in their own way by it all. They do everything that they can to eke out some reward from their fans.

Christy can't imagine herself as the center of attention. The spotlight is never strong enough to make up for the disparaging commentary that accompanies it. Even the admirers offer her only a thin compensation from the barrage. The lucky ones are those who only get stronger from the confrontation. She wishes she had that hardened constitution. But how long can the appreciation last? As the magic seems to fade in the harsh sunlight, the consummate performer is helpless to resist the barbed arrows.

She wishes that she had some dream that could help her escape from the grind of each day. It's not enough to hold her breath and just submerge. She needs a clearer inspiration to help her overcome the detrimental effects. If she only had some art to give her a lift. She wouldn't mind looking at the world through rose-colored glasses. But the colors are all so harsh. And they hurt her eyes.

Work is work. She can do little to change that. The best that she can do is try not to get caught up in the hectic pace. She tries not to think about it. The customers have a way of interrupting her concentration. The prolonged interferences with her appointed tasks becomes like torture. As she is bringing an order to a table, someone will pester her for ketchup. Or a child will drop a full plate on the floor as she is trying to take an order at another table. Or three tables will be screaming at her at once.

She wants to put all of it out of her mind when she gets home. She can't even watch TV or read a book. She sits there and stares into the haze of her life. How did things get so out of her control? She is still young enough to convince herself that there is more to her life. She is frightened about what is happening to her.

Work is no performance for her. She is there. If she gets good tips, it is because she is efficient. She tries to smile through all the shit. And they pile it on. Some days she feels that she has been picked out. It's not as if they're picking on her. But they're not all that pleasant. She goes about her business. She won't let the anger and the pettiness catch up with her. She won't take it out on her customers even when they are nasty with her.

She wants to get out of her work clothes. She needs to go to bed, but she is too tired to

do a thing. Maybe a quick shower will get her ready. She wants more to her life than bed and work. It is just getting more and more difficult to add anything more to her crazy schedule.

She lies back on the couch. Maybe she can rest enough to get the motivation that she needs. Then she will be able to drag herself to bed.

She has been pressured into working a double. Now she is at the tail end of the shift, deep in the dark side of the night. Most of the customers are two sheets to the wind. All the worst characteristics are magnified by the hour and the extreme inebriation. Christy is doing everything that she can not to let it bring her down. She has bigger dreams, and she is doing her best to remind herself of what they mean.

He seems a little different than the rest. A little wounded by the human traffic, he maintains enough of a sense of grandeur that he won't let it drag him down.

"Things didn't go so well for you tonight."

"I had my moments. I just counted to much on a sure thing. I let the moment slip out of my hands."

"Too bad."

"I got over-confident. I guess that I'm not playing with a full hand."

"You shouldn't be so down on yourself."

"It's not as if I'm doing charity work. I'm sort of a bad hombre."

"You? You're dressed so impeccably."

"I don't come off as too slick."

"You seem to be a nice guy. Are you going to tell me different?"

"I'm not quite sure. I wouldn't call myself the most loyal person."

"Why is that?"

"I'm supposed to be with this one girl. But I was playing to the hilt for another."

"You're main girl never got away from you, did she?"

"She's out of town. But she no longer seems to have the same appeal for me."

"You have to step back from it all. Try to see her best attributes. What drew you to her in the first place. You probably got too caught up in the moment. And that's all gone. Just let it go."

"I want to. But I was at the top of my game. And I feel that I've finally met my match."

"You can always try again."

"I just feel like such a loser."

"I can't help with that. I don't want encourage you too much."

"I know that feeling. If I'm a scoundrel, I'm ready to take my lashes. How do you avoid getting caught up in all this shit? You seem to have a level head."

"I have a strong bull shit detector. In this job, it just happens like that. All these guys in her are such jerks. Yourself excepted. But I have my fill of dumb assholes. So I'm not going to take one home with me."

"That seems cynical. Aren't you afraid that it's going to make you hard?"

"Do I look hard? You're the one who seems to be the true cynic. You can't even trust yourself."

"That really gets me down."

"Accept it for what it is. What do you have there?"

"I'm working on this script. I'm doing the revision right now."

"Wow! You're a writer. I have some great ideas. I'm sure that everyone tells you that."

"Go on!"

"I just see so much here. I've always thought about getting some of it down. I feel as if I have a million dollar idea."

"I don't want to pump you too much for your thoughts least I get accused of stealing one of your ideas."

"I'd love to inspire you if I could. I just see the other side of humanity. The part beyond the facade."

"Does that get you down?"

"Whatever happens is what happens. I try to roll with it."

"Wow! I feel stumped for ideas. I live too much in my head. It's good letting loose. I love to hear stories from other people."

"I know how that gets. I love to talk."

"Was it very busy tonight?"

"You saw how it was for a while. Everyone coming in her from the clubs. I really don't know why people like to eat at a moment like that. But that's my business so I accept it. The tips were good. Guys showing off for the girl that they're with. Then there's those guys who believe that every girl wants them so they're trying to come on to me. Some of them write their phone numbers on the back of the bill as if I'm going to call them."

"You are a real observer of the human condition. I get too jaded to see it all."

"I try to close my eyes and tune it all out. But it all happens too quickly. And I don't want to get hit off-balance."

"Whoa!"

"It gets a little strange. I'm just struggling to live my life."

"I'm in it, and I have enough trouble letting it be."

"I have a few friends. But none of them really understand."

"What are your dreams?"

"I have some of them. I just keep them locked inside. Maybe too deeply inside."

"You have to do what you can to let them flower. You're still very young."

"Time is catching up with me."

"Take a deep breath, and let it pass over you. The world's on your side."

"Should I take my bow?"

"Don't let them mess with you. You have a good heart. Can you say that about everybody?"

"There are a lot of good souls. They just seem to avoid this place. Maybe they don't know how bad it can get. There are a load of desperate types in here. It could be the time of night. Or the location."

"That is part of the charm."

"If they aren't yelling insults at you."

"That is true. It's hard letting it all roll over you."

"I get tough!"

"Good for you. If you had three wishes, what would they be?"

“That’s a hard one.”

“Take your time.”

“I’m thinking about it. I don’t want to waste them. If I just wished for money or fame, that could all turn against me.”

“And you already have a good heart.”

“I needed that. I just wish that I could get my ticket out of this place.”

“That’s a good place to start. Just to think about that for a while is a good thing.”

“But I want more than that. I don’t want to meet Prince Charming. I want to expand my capacity of love.”

“Wonderful.”

“And I want my health!”

“I wish that I had the talent to grant your wishes. But you seem to be on your way just on your own.”

She smiles a big one for him. Whatever he has to offer, he has sent her way.

“So you’ve made up for your not-so good night.”

“It was good. I just didn’t realize it.”

“Do you want to sit down?”

“I need to get back.”

The place is almost empty. But she needs to look busy.

“I’ve got a break in a little while.”

He is reading his script. He makes changes as he reads. He has put the conversation out of his mind. It helps him to balance the terrible night that preceded this place.

He wants to finish as much as he can before he gets home. Then he will wake up with a sense of accomplishment.

“What are you working on?”

“This horrendous script.”

“Did you write it?”

“I hate to admit that I did. I had been editing some scripts written by other people. But this time, I wrote one on my own.”

“Do you want me to make some suggestions?”

“I’m doing what I can to make it good. It just isn’t that special.”

“Maybe you’re being hard on yourself.”

“This is business.”

“I wouldn’t know.”

“You told me that you have these great ideas. Maybe you could help.”

“Do you want me to?”

“Actually I don’t want to think about it at all. You could help distract me.”

“Don’t you have to get it done anyway?”

“It’s going to get done no matter if I stay here all night.”

“You’re willing to do this.”

“I’ll do what I have to. I don’t want to leave it for tomorrow. This is a discipline.”

“That is dedicated.”

“It’s not that much different than coming here everyday.”

“It’s not quite the same. It can get pretty bad here.”

“I told you that this isn’t a very good script.”

“You’re going to make it better.”

“Sometimes it’s too far gone to help. Like trying to resuscitate a dead man.”

“You can’t work miracles.”

“Maybe for other people. Not for myself.”

“If I only I could grant you three wishes.”

“You took them all for yourself.”

“I wouldn’t mind sharing.”

“You’re going to need all of them for yourself.”

“I’m not that bad off, am I?”

“I’m not saying that. I gave you the wishes. I don’t want to take them back.”

“That is commendable. I guess my break is over.”

“How do I find you if I want to continue our conversation?”

“I’m here practically all the time.”

He grabs his coat to leave. He almost forgets his briefcase.

“You’re not going to keep writing.”

“I need to sleep.”

As she is cleaning up the table, she find his script is underneath a bunch of menus. She guesses that he thought the script was in the briefcase.

She ends up taking the script with her. She wants to look at it, and she plans to be back the next day.

When she gets home, she aches all over. She is paralyzed by her fatigue. She lies on the couch unable to do a thing. The script is on the coffee table. She wants to reach for it and start reading, but she has no energy. She wonders how he forgot it. Sure he thought that it was in his briefcase. But he must have been distracted when he was talking to her. She doesn’t want to make too much of it. She sees customers in and out all the time. She listens to their stories. Some are regulars so she sees their lives progress in front of her. But she doesn’t want to get involved. That is hardly the place. If she takes too much of an interest, they will make her job harder. They’ll ask more than she can give. She has already surrendered too much of herself.

What could the mystery of this script possibly be? He didn’t go into too much detail. And he wasn’t all that enthused about it. However, he worked consistently on it. He showed a real professionalism when it came to his writing. Sure it is job, but it is also his avocation. She wonders how she has been locked into a world without a clear out. Tomorrow, she might feel rested. On her days off, she’ll feel free, at least for a while. But there is never that shining star that will lead her out of her captivity.

She seems to have lost touch with a lot of her friends. They still rage it on the weekends. She hates having to pay for all that revelry. The trade off is that there isn’t much promise for her. She is surviving.

She’d love to be able to sit at the computer and write a story. It could help lift her out of her doldrums. She imagines a tropical island. She lazes on the beach. The exotic locale is a good beginning. But she can’t get lost in telling a romantic tale. No mysterious stranger stepping out of the darkness.

She reaches for the script. Suddenly, she has lit up a spark that gives her enough motivation to take a peek what is on the page.

*Forty Hours of Hell.* She is ready to read the tale of her double. All the back-breaking lifting. The boisterous customers. Her private hell. She wants to scream just remembering it all.

She has her own vision. It is borne of her soul-wrenching work. Her lost hopes. She needs more craft to make it all appealing. What is the hook to pull the viewer in. It is easy to identify with her story. But she needs something else to make it truly entertaining.

Forty hours. How long had she been working? It seems like forever.

She feels as if she is absorbing the script as she holds it in her lap. She is waiting for her wishes to come true. If she actually believes in something. Someone to wake her up from her forty hours. Again the Prince Charming story. She has to find the way to get away on her own. She has to get away from it all.

He decides to leave the work for the morning. It has been quite a wild night. The waitress was comforting after his quick demise earlier in the evening.

When he wakes up, he opens up his briefcase. The script isn't there. He has a copy on his computer. But that copy has none of his notes. He's not sure if he can reproduce those without the original. He's going to have to go back to the restaurant.

He tries to make it over that day, but his schedule is packed with meetings. Even though the restaurant is open all night, he decides to postpone his trip there until the next morning.

"She didn't come in for work yesterday."

"Is she sick?"

"She didn't even call."

"What about today?"

"She's on the schedule for today. But we have no idea what happened to her."

He hardly wants to give up on recovering his script.

"I left something here. A script. Did anyone find it?"

"I could ask around. But I don't think that anything was left here."

"You wouldn't have tossed it in the trash."

"Did it have your name on it?"

"It was just a draft. I hadn't sent it out anywhere."

"People leave a lot of shit in here. If it's something of worth, we put it in this drawer over here. Let me take a look."

"Do you see it?"

"There's a lot of stuff here. It doesn't seem to be here."

"You couldn't give me an address for her. A phone number."

"Not really. I can call her again."

"Do that?"

"Let me try."

"Great!"

"It's ringing."

"If the machine answers, leave a message."

"There is no machine."

"This is getting really strange."

“I can take your info. If she shows up, she can call you.”

He feels a little dejected. So she took the script. That is his best assumption. Why is she nowhere to be found? He could try to hire a detective. But does it really seem worth it?

What might have prompted her to stop coming in to work? Was it something in his script? As he contemplates his loss, it seems even more important than it had been. What had he written down? He wishes that he could do his editing on his computer. Then he could back up his work. But he doesn't have that option. He needs to have the hard copy.

He goes over the details of the script with the hope of refreshing himself about his changes. He is only getting immersed in the story as if it really is his.

He decides to have lunch at the restaurant. He takes out a slip of paper and starts to make notes. He runs through the story. Last night, he had recognized a real problem in the presentation. Now it all seems a mess. There is little that he can do to make it all make sense. Maybe the waitress has the answer.

“She's probably not coming back.”

“Do you write? Maybe you could give me some ideas.”

“I like to see movies. But I don't know how they all go together.”

He is feeling desperate. Even if his life was disordered, his script made sense. Now it is getting too crazy.

She has left her apartment, and she is thinking about leaving town. She feels bad that she never had the opportunity to get the script back to him. She's not sure if she should keep it. It doesn't even have a name or a phone number on it.

“If you're going to take that kind of shit at work, shouldn't you get more of a reward for it?”

“What are you saying to me?”

“Don't you think that you should get paid for all that effort?”

“I'd love to. I'm not sure that it's possible.”

“What if you could walk away with a lot more money than you do?”

“Could I still leave the work at the office?”

“More or less.”

“This is not something that is illegal or habit-forming.”

“Not if you play it right.”

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

“Now, you get paid for putting on a show.”

“I get paid for bringing food to a table. For meeting the needs of my customers. For keeping my mouth shut.”

“But the more that you tease and entertain, the higher your tips.”

“I'm not there to flirt with the customers.”

“It doesn't help.”

“I need to draw the line. It's one thing to be polite. But if I lead some guy on, he's going to expect more. Either he causes a scene then and there, or he comes back another time and give me that look.”

“You don't know how to work that for you advantage.”

“I don't have to. I have a life. I want to keep it separate from my work.”



“What kind of life is it? You spend all your time trying to recover.”

“It’s my life. It’s worktime, not playtime. If I wanted it differently, I’d work in a night club. I’m not a goddam social director. I’ve got my respect.”

“What’s the big deal about your respect? It all comes down to money.”

“The money is only part of it. I take a certain pride in what I do. And it marks my commitment for something more in life. I’m not ready to give up.”

“I’m not asking you to. Just get what you deserve.”

“That sounds good. But you seem to be suggesting a whole mess of trouble. And I don’t deserve that.”

“That isn’t what I’m saying.”

“Explain it more clearly. I am a willing listener.”

“You take all this shit with customers. And they’re there to tease you. Why not play the game with higher stakes? Make them expect a lot more. Make them pay for their expectations. Just don’t give yourself so freely.”

“I’m not. I told you how I draw the line.”

“You shouldn’t have to do that.”

“Do what?”

“You shouldn’t draw the line. Make the job do that for you. Get paid for what you’re worth.”

“I’m pretty aware of what I’m worth. And I get paid for those hours that I put in.”

“But you’re giving so much more of yourself. You know that when you go home.”

“I don’t think that there is any other way. Not without damaging myself for life.”

“You need to think about it.”

She already has. That is why she decided that she couldn’t work at the restaurant anymore. She didn’t need any more guys assuming that they knew what was best for her.

“I’m trying to look you in the eyes. Who are you?”

“Someone trying to mind my business.”

“You gave me one of those looks. Do you like what you see?”

“I don’t know. Why are you picking on me?”

“Picking on you! Do you want to see more.”

“I’m not sure. Maybe. Yeah, I’d like to see more.”

“What are you going to let me see in return? How about a little green?”

“That would be nice. Are you willing?”

“I’m not sure. What if you give me something, and I don’t give you anything in return?”

“I’d feel cheated.”

“Think of it as a gamble. Is it worth gambling on the possibility that I’m going to see a little more?”

“If you’re willing to show me, I’m willing to take a look?”

“What about what I’ve shown you so far. Does that turn you on?”

“A little.”

“What’s the problem? Want me to show you a little more? What would you like to see?”

“I don’t know.”

“Let’s say that you pay for what you’ve already seen.”

“I could see as much with my imagination.”

“So you’re looking for free. You’re ripping me off.”

“It doesn’t work like that.”

“The hell it doesn’t. You’re getting turned on for free. Don’t you think that I deserve something in return?”

“You’d have to show me a lot more before I was willing to answer that question.”

“If you don’t get what you want, you’ll get a little angry.”

“If you promise, and you don’t live up to your promise, you might get angry.”

“Especially if you’ve paid a lot of money.”

“Yeah.”

“Look at it my way! I’ve shown you enough to get your imagination going. And I still haven’t got anything in return. I should be really angry.”

“You should.”

“So what’s your problem.”

“I imagined that you were going to give me a little more. You worked me up enough. I was just hoping that you would give me my fair share.”

“I haven’t got a thing. Not even enough to inspire a fantasy. You don’t really impress me.”

“I guess that I don’t. But that’s not my job.”

“And it’s mine? I never advertised myself as an entertainer.”

“You’ve been teasing me.”

“I’ve just been trying to explain that look of yours.”

“You’re seeing a lot more than I do.”

“Just like you’re seeing a lot more of me when you use your imagination.”

“I’ve got enough from you already.”

“What’s the problem?”

“I don’t need bull shit to go along with the business.”

“I didn’t know that this was part of the business.”

She isn’t use to the change.

“What’s your name?”

“Christy.”

“Is that your real name?”

“What do you want it to be?”

“Christy, sounds good. Christy, are you willing to help me out?”

“I’m not really sure what that means.”

“You and me. Are you willing to help me out?”

“I don’t want to lead you on. I don’t really feel what you do.”

“How much would it take to get you to feel the same thing?”

“Quite a lot. This is not really part of the business transaction.”

“What are you willing to give me?”

“A service. I can give you time. Maybe you can spell out what you really want.”

“What difference is that supposed to make?”

“We can be clear on our options.”

“Options. Are you willing to expand those options?”

“Within reason. But I don’t want to take my job home with me if you know what I mean.”

“I don’t. You could explain that to me.”

“My job is what I do for money. Then I have a personal life. I’m not going to mix the two. I’m not going to share details of my home life. I’m not going to get too emotionally involved in anything at work. I don’t want my clients to try to intrude on my personal life.”

“Are you open to opportunities? Are you willing to try new things?”

“I’ve got enough variety in my life to do. What are you suggesting?”

“Could we get to know each other any better?”

“You could be a regular customer. But that is where it is going to end. I have enough stimulation in my life.”

“Is this you talking, or it a script?”

“What script?”

“Haven’t you been working on a script?”

“What gives you that idea?”

“The way that you look at me.”

“What does that mean?”

“You look like you’re acting.”

“There are some things in my life that I need to keep private.”