

17. BORED AND BOTHERED

She was already nervous. She was supposed to meet someone at the Roadhouse, and it seemed like he wasn't going to show up.

He was taking pictures of her and writing things in a notebook

"Why did you take my picture like that?"

"I like to look at pretty things. I wanted to have your picture."

She looked over at his notebook and tried to read what he had written, "What are you writing in your notebook?"

"Just my notes."

"Are you working for my husband?"

"No."

"Then let me see your notebook."

He guarded it with his life. But she combined tickles and caresses to get it away from him. She flipped through his meaningless doodles. He didn't seem like much of a detective.

"There's nothing here."

"I told you that I'm not working for your husband."

"I really don't believe you. You're just disorganized."

She gave him a smile.

"Are you trying to flirt with me? You're really pathetic. You need to wipe your nose and run back to your wife."

"I didn't say anything about a wife."

"Are you going to take me back to your place? And we can get naked together."

"I'm married." He seemed very sheepish. She gasped. He half expected her to get up and leave.

"It's a good thing that you get that out of the way first thing."

"I'm just trying to be honest."

She saw that honesty was a convenience that he used to his advantage.

"So what do you want to do now, Mr. Playboy of North Georgia?"

"There's a motel down the street."

"Great. I feel like a cheap hooker. You pick me up in a bar and take me to a seedy motel. OK, Mr. Smith whatever you command."

He was insulted by her comments. "Lady, tell me what you want because I can't figure out."

"I thought that you'd drive me down to Atlanta. You'd have a reservation waiting at the Westin. You'd order up room service, and we could lock ourselves in for days."

"That ain't going to happen."

"Correction: none of this is going to happen. You can take your drink and your rusted-out Chevy and head on back to your wife."

He looked in her eyes and tried to salvage something. "I really don't want to do that."

"I thought that I was talking to a man. Now you seem like a lost sheep."

"There's a Ramada about ten miles from here. We could go there."

"Are you sure that the clerk isn't going to say something to your wife?"

“It’s far enough out of town that gossip won’t travel that far.”

“Great. Now I feel that I’m back in the lap of luxury.”

“Let me get you another drink and that’ll settle us both down.”

He came back with her whisky sour. He was staring at her legs.

“They look great, don’t they? I just had a shower.”

“You did all that for me.”

Their sarcastic banter was starting again. It made him feel confident. That a woman like this, a woman of class was hanging around with him. He thought about Edna at home. He was now doing something that had nothing to do with his old life. He felt that this was his ticket. One kiss from this woman, and he would now be accepted into this other world. A world of sophistication and golden opportunity.

He wondered, “Do you often do this sort of thing?”

“Buy insurance in dim lit bars.”

No, pick up strangers.”

“I didn’t think that I was getting picked up. Besides, Dale, I feel that I’ve known you all my life.”

“I could tell you my story. I played football in high school. I even went to college for a few years.”

“Dale, I really wasn’t looking for a story. That’s why I got out of Atlanta.”

“Are you trying to get away from someone? Are you running from someone?”

“It’s more like I’m running toward something. A promise of a new life. Anything to get me out of the hell that I’ve been in.”

She seemed to hypnotize him as he talked. It didn’t matter what she said. He just stared at her dark red lips and her heavily made-up eyes. This was something that he had never known before. A woman who took chances. Who was completely spontaneous. Who didn’t care what anyone thought. She lived for pleasure every minute of the day.

Her hands seemed so soft. The nails were freshly manicured and painted. He wanted to touch them. To kiss them. To take the fingers in his mouth and just suck on them.

“I can help you get away.”

“Can you now. I’m ready to hop on your train to oblivion.”

“Whatever you say? How’s the whiskey express moving.”

“It’s moving a million miles an hour.”

“It’s not going to slow down until you’re in my arms.”

“Slow down, loverboy. I thought that you were here to sell me insurance. You don’t seem to be protecting me against much of anything.”

“I could protect you against anything that comes your way.”

“Fire and flood.”

“I’m there for you. To feel your fire and contain your flood.”

“Another man with a dirty mouth. Do you talk that way to the wife and kids?”

He felt that his perfect life was being encroached on. He wanted a ready excuse.

“I usually don’t do this sort of thing.”

“So when do you dip into your bag of unusual tricks. Is this how you make a quick sale?”

He felt that she was insulting his identity, what made him successful. He hated to be belittled.

“I do all right for myself.”

“When I started talking to you, I thought you were a little more than all right. Dale, can you be a little more than all right? Is that what they call your around here, all right Dale. All right!”

He gripped her hand. He wanted to seize her then and there, to kiss her all over. To let her know what kind of man he really was.

“Quiet down. I’ve got friends here.”

“Tell you what I’m going to do. I’m going to walk out of here. And if you’re man enough you’re going to meet me at the Ramada with a bottle. And we can scream all night about who we really are. I’ll be registered under the name of Kennedy.”

As he watched her slink out of the bar, he was shaking. He tried to calm down. It was easy doing the crime. The hard part was not getting caught. He sat there a few minutes just finishing his drink. That had been a close call. He felt as if he had just avoided a sink-hole. All his life was being sucked into it.

After he bought the whiskey, he wondered if she would actually been at the motel. His wife would probably be up waiting for him. As the night wore on, she would inevitably fade. He had gone on these late calls before. The insurance business demanded that you see the customers when it was convenient for them.

Dale’s heart was still racing. He needed to settle down if he wasn’t going to explode into a bundle of fluster and misplaced affection. He needed to stay in control.

The desk clerk had trouble finding her room number.

“Kenny Lane.”

“No, Kennedy. I think that it’s Sally Kennedy.”

“Oh here it is. Let me ring her up.”

He seemed to take his time.

“She said that you could go up. Room 256. Take the elevator and turn left when you get off at the second floor.”

“I know the hotel. I’ve been there before.”

He gripped his bottle and headed over to the elevator. Next to him a weary couple were ready for some needed rest after a long drive. They smelled of the fatigue that the road brings. He smiled at them as he walked into the elevator. He looked up at the ceiling. His witnesses were still dazed from their drive.

“Have a great day!” they called back to him as he got off the elevator. It was already late in the evening. He wondered if they knew the difference anymore.

He knocked on her door. She gave him a cold stare.

“What took you so long? You had to call your wife.”

“Don’t make this more difficult than it has to be.”

“You sound like you’re going to the dentist. Are you afraid of him using the drill?”

“I really don’t have a fear of dentists. I always get anesthetic.”

“Let’s see what kind of pain killer you brought for Mrs. Kennedy.”

“Kennedy, is that really your last name?”

“Just because you show up with presents doesn’t make you Santa Claus.”

“What is your last name?”

“Officer, do you want to see my driver’s license. I met this man in a bar and he’s been harassing me ever since.”

“I just thought...,” he didn’t know what to say.”

“Where we’re going, you don’t need names.”

He wanted to slide his hands along her smooth legs.

“I want to kiss you.”

“Slow down, baby. You leave me waiting in the hotel room for almost an hour, and now you want to pin me down on the bed and play wrestling games. I need a drink. I need some romance.”

“If you wanted romance, what are you doing in a motel in the middle of nowhere?”

“I told you that I’m trying to get away.”

“The law’s not after you.”

“Nothing, like that. I was getting bored in Atlanta. I just jumped on the interstate and started driving north. And here I am.”

“My angel at midnight. Just my luck.”

“Are you feeling lucky?”

She came to stand close to him. He could feel her hot breath. He felt as if he was getting too close to a hot furnace. He wanted to get burned. He wanted all his troubles to drift away in the fire.

She looked up at him seductively. He was paralyzed. He knew that he could no longer look back at his life. His world was changing.

Her lips were sticky from the whiskey and coke. He lapped up the sticky mixture with his tongue. The passion was driving him, but he worked to savor each kiss, to let it say everything that it could to him. He surrounded her lower lip with his. He drew all its energy to him.

There were volumes that he wanted to share with her. So much that he wanted to say. But their lips spoke for them. He looked down at her sparkling green eyes. She was everything fresh to him. She was his spring morning. He let the passion dazzle her. They were both intoxicated by the intensity of the kiss.

He held her so hard. He didn’t want to let go. She was telling him everything with her body, everything that had remained silent in his life up until now. How had he been so isolated? She could speak to him in so many ways, ways that made his wife seem mute.

He hated the silence. He wanted to call out, to express all the enjoyment that now touched him.

“I better go.”

“Aren’t you going to lie with me, and enjoy the night.

“I’ve got my wife waiting up.”

“You know that she’s already fallen asleep.”

He didn’t want to hear her speaking the truth. He wanted to get away on his own. As she lay on the bed, the heavy smell of alcohol filled the room. It taunted him, made him want her more.

Her freshness had given way to her untamed side. She was wild as a tiger, and he wanted

to face this beast again. To give everything of himself to its danger.

“You better run along to your wife. After all, you look pretty spent.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

Hew thought that she had been putting him down all night. His sense of inferiority was getting to him. He held this anger in.

“You’re holding back. You only give me part of yourself.”

“I can’t give you everything. I’ve got a life outside of here.”

“You’ve never really known passion. Never let yourself go. You always come up just short.”

“I really don’t need bedside psychiatry at this hour.”

“Dale, what do you need?”

She was lying on the bed with her skirt propped up. It was wrinkled. Her blouse was still open. The sheets were tossed all over the bed.

If he left now, he could do some kind of repentance to make up for his misdeed. But if he stayed longer, he would be accepting this as a way of life. He felt that he would only regret this new way of life. He could never have enough of her. And once she held him, he could not let go. He let all his dreams just flow into her. The more that he wanted to take it all back, the stronger was his need to hold her close. To pull her body close to his. She could give him everything that would make him feel complete.

He wanted to push on. To again feel her skin next to his. To let those tender kisses progress to a passion more avid. It devoured. His satisfaction only made him want more. As he moved with her, he sensed that her body answered all his questions. Even when they were apart, he would remember their transgression in the flesh. That would only make him want her more.

“I really need to go now.”

She was already in another place. He had taken everything that he could from her, and she needed to find herself again. She lay underneath the covers while he dressed. He would have a drive home while she could just fall asleep.

She anticipated all his explanations that he worked out as he drove home. She knew how he would have to adjust himself so that he could face his wife. The mask would have to be pulled tight over his face so that he couldn’t let on.

If he didn’t care for her, it would be so much easier. He could look back on their time together like a game of tennis. He could leave all the action on the courts. But their game had been way too jarring for him to file it away in the back of his mind. She knew that it was an obsession for him as he drove home. The satisfaction of her knowledge permitted her to sleep well. Nothing was bothering her at all.

It was hardly her dream to wait for a bored husband in this tawdry motel. He had already had his taste, and that would do him for a week or two. She had more pressing matters back in Atlanta.