

## 17. BED AND BORED

Her white Lexis SUV made its way around the circle. She took off her sunglasses and clipped them to the rearview mirror. She was late. But it didn't phase her in the least. This was her life. She was in control."

"Honey, where the hell have you been?"

"I've had a long day. I don't need any of your shit flying at me."

"I've got a dinner. We're a half an hour late."

"You're going to have to go without me. I've got a splitting headache. I need a long bath. I just want to sit in the tub with a champagne cocktail and wash my cares away."

She had bluffed Lenny away. That was exactly what she needed for the moment. She didn't want to hear any of his tawdry accusations. It was her life and she didn't sign on for him to be her master.

"What about the part I will be faithful and true?"

The question was echoing in her head. Although he would never ask such a thing. For the time being he would keep his suspicions to himself. His world was crumbling around him. She refused to play the role of the convenient scapegoat.

Lenny knew that he could never crack that impenetrable image of hers. Try as he may, he clung to what little economic leverage that he had over her. Somewhere in all this, there was the illusion of a marriage. But that seemed predicated on his uncritical worship of her.

He had finally slammed the door on her and headed to that infernal dinner of his. In leaving the house he had muttered something about divorce. But he could never really contemplate anything like that. They really had married for love. As the love slipped away, his fortunes increased. Neither would be accustomed to anything less than the lap of luxury. And in a divorce, she could clean him out. At least, she could gut the engine of his financial empire. There was no prenup that could protect his ill-gotten gains.

At this point, Lenny was in cahoots with a shady real estate developer from Cordelia, Georgia. Ray Worth knew every loophole in Georgia law and used it to his advantage. They had been working on some vacation properties in North Georgia. Due to Ray's mismanagement and the utter folly of the investment, it looked like the project was indeed going south. It would take some evil genius to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat. Lenny could not bear the brunt of a potential loss.

His wife had engaged him in chilling discussion.

"Lenny, it looks like you may be worth more dead than alive."

"Don't go getting any bright ideas."

"I love you, my darling, as the sun that shines. But if you screw this up, my star is going to go out. I don't even want to contemplate that possibility."

As the warm water slid off her body, all she could think of was her poor husband floating in some toxic waste dump in the mountains. She was not going to see things come to such a tragic end.

After her shower, she felt ultimately refreshed. She smoothed body lotion all over herself to retain that youthful glow. With her hands, she was creating a work of art. This perfection was being readied for its eventual tainting. But that would only add to the mystique. She found the

perfect dress and shoes to effect her impression. As she did her makeup, she knew that nothing would get past that mask. No one could penetrate the dramatic poses that she performed for the world around her.

She had first ended up in that North Georgia bar after delivering some legal papers to her husband-to-be. It only took a little while to get there from their well-manicured lawns of Canton. But she was stepping into another world. She prayed that she would not fall into the pit that had surrounded her. But if she had to do the devil's work to suit her purposes so be it. She was not put on this earth to do penance. And if that was her precedent from day one, it would continue to be that way until her dying breath.

It seemed like an incredibly base location to dabble in sin. But she would have to keep up the pretense until it could bear some visible result. Dale Simon was hardly any catch by any means. But as a business associate of Ray Worth, he might eventually come in handy. For the time being he was the perfect distraction from her mundane life with Lenny. Cordelia, Georgia was sufficiently removed from the society of Atlanta for her to never bear the brunt of a crucial misstep with this hapless insurance salesman.

The woman of many faces called up Dale to set up their assignation. Dale was in a nasty situation, and he begged her to meet him closer to Cordelia rather than in their previous junction. When she walked into the bar, she truly felt that she was in the midst of hell. This sweet bird of paradise had been plucked from her tropical Eden and left to wither in the obscure regions of Hades. She longed for a proper rescue but recognized that Dale would only drag her further down that slippery slope of hedonism. A quick drink and she could pretend that her circumstance were indeed blessed. She wondered to herself what she was sacrificing her dignity for. An exile to Cordelia could only be a fate worse than death.

He finally made his way into the place. She was pissed, "Dale, what the hell were you thinking?"

"If it isn't Mrs. Kennedy herself. What were you expecting? A limousine service."

"I feel like I need a bath just walking in this place."

"Maybe I could shower you with kisses."

"Maybe I could leave your pathetic little soul in the sauce where it was meant to stew," she held back no venom for her intended.

"Is that any way to greet a lover?"

"You're coming up in the world since the last time that I met you."

He had a fatal charm. He was the perfect partner for sin. She could blame her errant ways on her apparent weakness for the appeals of surface. As she descended to her lower depths, she could let him float up to the level of pond scum that he so well represented.

"I'm certainly going to have to drink enough to help me anesthetize myself against this downturn in fortune." She stared intently at vodka cranberry.

"As long as you don't forget your poison of choice."

She was now sailing along so smoothly that anything might be called an improvement. He looked like he could do things to her that would make her forget her more cynical moments.

"Mrs. Kennedy, you seems like such a pessimist about the human condition."

"What do you want me to say? That sneaking around the back of our respective spouses indicates the apex of civilization. This is the kind of offense for which Rome burned."

“Then let’s just be the vandals that we are and enjoy our fate.”  
 “That may be easy for you to say. You’re not the princess that’s going to have to kiss the frog.”

“This frog may resent you maligning his amphibious nature.”

“I haven’t called you slimy.”

“But you’re saving that appellation until the appropriate moment.”

“Where did I find you?”

“Crawling under the opportunistic rock.”

“So now you’re a snake?”

“I can be any animal that you need me to be to do your bidding.”

The pickings in the bar were so slim that she could hardly venture over to some other victim. After spending so long getting ready, she wasn’t going to waste her meticulous image on a return trip home without any action to show for her troubles.

“So where is the team going to play tonight.”

“There’s a lovely little chalet on the interstate.”

“I’m hearing a Motel 6 where I have to dodge the cockroaches.”

“Think the Ritz without the bother.”

“You mean the room is only five feet from where you park the car. As they say, perfect for a getaway.”

There was something substantial in his nakedness. She could ignore the maudlin commentary that had preceded their love-making. His carelessness was actually a virtue when it came to physical contact.

She did not want to be pressured by letting her affair drift into a full-blow relationship. Dale seem satisfied with the sexual side of their interaction. He expected no more. This made her feel without a worry. It contrasted with her weighty conflict with Lenny. She could keep her life with her husband while find some kind of pleasure with another man.

As he dressed to leave, she thought about how much she had given herself to him. She didn’t want any of it to stop. She knew that she would have to head back to her house in Canton. She hated the uniformity of her subdivision. But that life would be an ideal for Dale. This made their meetings all the more enjoyable. He could partake of her life for that short time. He held to all its physical attributes that she gave off. Even her kiss spoke of gold for him.

If their contact expressed such promise to him, didn’t she have to fear him clinging to her. Hardly. He was so harmless. He could desire, but he couldn’t hold. So after their sex, he needed to return to the security of his wife. He needed the dream to sustain his reality. But he didn’t truly have the ambition to allow him to trade the dream for that reality. Dale Simon could not cast off all the trappings of his Cordelia world.

In this half-world between Canton and Cordelia, he was this scummy little man who was the ideal candidate for a casual liaison. It was like eating chocolate. He offered all the sickeningly sweet delights of the candy. But no one could survive on sweets. So the eventual result would be a need to escape his influence.

After her encounter, she was still a little tipsy. But she was confident enough to drive. She took a wrong turn coming out of the motel and soon picked up a police escort.

“Shit!”

She was now mercilessly lost. But if she asked the officer, he'd start asking too many questions. Try as she might, she couldn't shake his tail. She simply pulled over and waited for him to come to her.

She noticed his first name on his nameplate.

'Hello, Jack.'

"Mighty friendly for this time of night."

"Honestly, sir, I'm lost."

"I can tell. We don't normally get such high class visitors at this time of night."

What was he trying to imply?

"I am really was lost."

He added to her troubles, "You also seemed to be weaving a little."

"I'm tired. I just want to get out of here."

He was hardly following standard procedure. This was hardly the place to get caught with a psycho-cop. But she had to play along with him until his actual motive became clear. He could smell her perfume coming from inside the car. It encouraged the sense of authority that he was trying to convey.

She was convinced that he was pulling her chain. He really had nothing on her. If he did, he didn't seem to be taking advantage of it. What was coming next?

"It's pretty obvious to me that a woman like you isn't up here for a casual drive. I'd guess a little hanky-panky."

He was now clearly out of bounds. Where was he leading?

"I'm going to let you go this time. But you're going to have to come back to Cordelia for a little community service."

His mannerisms were completely rude. Unlike Dale, Jack was totally lacking in anything that might remotely be called charm. What made it worse, he really thought he had personality. He no doubt had used this attitude to advance him in the sheriff's office.

He realized that she was grossly out of bounds. And he wanted to use that to his advantage. For her part, she never knew when such a contact might come in handy.

"Well, Jack, you can give me a warning, and I'll come back to Cordelia when you've devised the suitable punishment for me."

She got his number. Did he really think that he would see her again? She knew that they didn't have thing in common. She hated his ruthless physicality. He seemed like a mere brute. But he had purpose. She simply had to move him her way.

Her run in with the officer gave her more confidence in facing her husband.

"This time you really have gone too far."

"I went out for a drink. Then I got pulled over and hassled by some cop. He even forced his phone number on me."

She showed Lenny Jack's card.

"I ought to sue the bastard."

"He might come in handy in case you get in some kind of mess in Cordelia."

"Why were you drinking out there anyway?"

"I wasn't. I got lost on one of those rural roads. Next thing I was in the middle of nowhere."

She hated the fact that Lenny was now taking pity on her. It made it harder to reject him. She wanted to tell him that she had been having wild sex in a hotel room. But she really couldn't take advantage of his rage at this point. Where could it lead?

She needed a better plan if she really did want to leave him. She couldn't imagine being with Dale. That would be more of a disaster. But she didn't want to go down with Lenny's ship. As long as he was afloat, she needed to take him for everything that he was worth.

She hated sharing the conjugal bed with him. She needed some excuse to make sure that he was already asleep before she made her way in there.

"I need to wash off this North Georgia grime."

She wasn't kidding.

Once in the bathtub, she thought that this was the ideal place for her. In water, she felt so much like herself. Too bad she couldn't drink a little more champagne. She was almost on the verge of passing out to begin with.

She put a towel around herself and headed for the bed. He was already asleep. It was a noisy sleep. She sought the bed in the guest room. Despite her fatigue, she wasn't ready to go to sleep quite yet.

Her mind was still working. She had suspicions about the illegality of her husband's dealings with Ray Worth. Lenny needed to dig his own grave. She wouldn't help. But she needed to disengage herself from her husband while she still could.

"Tell me about insurance, Dale"

Dale was already way ahead of the game. He seemed a little sharper at a lunch time meeting than he did in their nightly visits.

"I've already talked to your husband. You don't have to pressure me. He's trying to find some kind of protection for that deal that he's got with Ray."

"What about life insurance? The man could have an accident in the woods. He might drown in the white water rapids after a fall off a cliff."

"I'm not really into murder."

"Neither am I. I love Lenny. I just don't want something bad to happen to him, and then I have to pick up all the pieces." She gave a really tragic whimper. She wanted to be convincing even if she doubted her own motives.

"I could talk to him. But I assume that he's got life insurance policy."

"You can't have too much insurance. Isn't that your motto?"

He looked at the long legs projecting from her short skirt. That was enough to preoccupy his dirty mind. She just filled in the details.

She could have Dale write up a policy for Lenny, and just let the cards fall where they may. Lenny had been such a find breadwinner that she didn't want to bite the hand that fed her. She just had to make sure that there was bread when the hand was no longer being held out.

Later that afternoon, Dale wasted no time practicing the skills that she sought in him. Even if he took no risks in the boardroom, he was a major player in her bedroom. Since they only meant to spend a few hours in the room, it seemed that the standards were coming down. But all they needed was a bed and they could let their imagination take them from there. He drowned his troubles in her honey fragrance. She forgot about Lenny as the two of them wrestled in the afternoon heat.

All other plans could be put on hold until a later date.