

## 11. THEFT

*He reads the beginning of the bulletin, "If anyone knows who stole my purse please tell me. " He looks at the notice. The described deed fits something that he remembers doing.*

*He composes his reply, "I stole your purse. I needed to feel what it was like. I got a rush from doing it. Even thought there wasn't much of worth inside. I just needed something to get me going through the day. And it helped. At least for now."*

*He doesn't send it. There is more that he needs to say, "Now that I know where you live, I will have to go looking for you. You have become my guardian angel."*

*He needs a guardian angel. He is not sure how to introduce himself*

*The night is perfectly still. That is my greatest fear.*

I've had a rough night. There is a thrill dumping all her stuff out on my floor and going through it. I hold her keys in my hand. I could use these. After all, I have her license with her address on it. Her whole world has opened up to me.

I imagine hiding in her place. A closet would be great. She would never suspect me there. If I copy the keys and get the purse back to her in the morning, she won't even have time to change the locks. I'll have a new friend. And then we can get together for a little fun. I'll just invite myself over. It will be like a surprise party. I'm going to be the first one there. I'm the only guest. I'll pop out of the closet. Surprise! She'll just die. She really will.

Her name is Jeanne. Hugs and kisses.

I put her license in the middle of the floor. This is the key to it all. It unlocks her world. She can replace her lost identity card. But she can't replace her identity. I have her address, her social security number, her credit cards. What more is there to Jeanne? Where are her dreams except in these items? What she has bought? What she wants to buy? All her regrets a penny at a time.

Who she is and who she will be. All that is expressed for me. These are the limits of her life. What she wants but can never have. How she cannot escape the confines of her four walls. She is the prisoner of her identity.

She has spent years believing in the limitless possibilities. A bit of a local celebrity, guys have fallen over each other just trying to get a few minutes with this sweet young thing. I am looking at her birth date and watching that half-life tick away. And now the candle no longer burns as bright. She has yet to be discovered. And her own discovery is even more brutal. The guys are still there. And they still have all their lines and promises. But the magic is gone. And every day is now exactly as limited as the last.

I am here to get the movie going. To change the script. To turn the lights on in the darkness. To get her to show the kind of emotion that she never knew was in her. I am the director looking for my cast. And Jeanne is the star.

It is wonderful that such a free spirit can open her world to me. Sure my night was rough. It's been difficult getting going. But one look at her stuff, and I am already animated. I am so excited to be stimulated by this new addition in my life. I pick up the license and shake it up and down.

She has money in her purse. I don't want that. There is no thrill in taking her cash. That doesn't bring me any closer to her. The thief may have wanted to steal from her. That is not my desire. I am here to offer her freedom. I am her to watch over her. To protect and serve.

I already know her better than her friends. I have studied these artefacts. I have made a few phone calls. I have learned about her desperation. How she has pushed so hard that she can't push anymore. So she has settled in to her routine. She is just trying to keep her head above water. And I am trying to throw her a lifeline. Jeanne, darling, I am here for you.

It must be rough when you finally realize that there is no one out there who is going to offer you the rescue that you can't find in yourself. I can tell what is happening. She has always believed that there is something deeper in there, something that will last her a lifetime. I am doing everything that I can trying to reach her. I will have to make an appearance in person.

This must have been a hectic week if she let her purse slip away from her. This happens to people all the time. They get a little crazy. They overextend themselves. And they let the most important thing get away.

Her purse is everything for her. This is her identity. All these other plans project outwards from this source. And she let this get away. Everything else is now on hold. There is no future until she recovers her past. For the time being, I am not ready to yield.

I do not know Jeanne. Not really. But we are quickly becoming friends. I am walking a mile in her shoes. I am seeing the day break the way that she sees it break.

I have to make a decision quickly. I have to contact her before she tries to cancel her credit cards.

"I found your purse."

"Who is this?"

"I'm the guy who found your purse."

"You did. Oh, thank you."

"Everything is there. Your money. Your license. Nothing has been taken."

"Oh thank you. I need to meet you."

"You know that coffee shop by the high tower."

"The Bergen Tower."

"Yeah, that's the one. There's a coffee shop. Meet me there."

"What time?"

"When is convenient? Now? Lunch time? When you get off work?"

"I can meet you at 6."

"That is perfect." I want to tell her to come alone. Her life depends on it.

I get there a little early. I've had nothing else to do during my day. I am looking forward to meeting her. I will be able to shake her hand, to touch her skin. I will be able to stare in those eyes.

I imagine her being curt and business like. She does not know me. But I know her. I need to assume an identity. I need to be someone that she wants to know.

I first imagine that I will try to make her stay. I will invite her to get a cup of coffee. That will not work. That will make her suspicious.

I dress as a business man. I polish my shoes. I have to make her feel totally comfortable with me. I will not move a muscle. I will not let her know in the least what I am thinking.

"Here's your purse. I need to go."

She will want to offer me her thanks. Maybe some kind of reward. She has no idea the kind of reward that I have planned for her. I will be my charming self. I will let her know how

excited I am to meet her. But I will be short. I will escape her clutches quickly.

I won't even look her in the face. It will leave her wondering. Surprise is on my side. She is my new friend. I love her smile.

I have looked for a picture of a guy in her effects. There are none. She is alone. Maybe there is someone waiting in the wings. But for now, she is not with anyone. That only makes it better for me.

I get there early. I have a cup of coffee. I stake the place out. I am ready for her.

When she comes in the place, she is all smiles. I deliberately look down. I motion her over to the table.

"Jeanne!"

"You have my things. Great!"

I hand her the purse. I maintain my composure. She is thinking about me. I look up just long enough to let her look in my face. I don't want her to fear me. I want her to think that I am shy. That I am afraid of people.

Jeanne, I am not afraid of you.

Jeanne is curious. She doesn't want me to go. "Let me give you something."

"That is OK." I start to walk off.

"Let me at least buy you a cup of coffee."

That is the least that she can do. This is how we make friends.

"I'm sort of in a hurry. I guess that I have time for a cup of coffee."

I do have time. I have all the time in the world. Now I show my face to her. Look at me, sweetheart. We are meant to be together.

She sits down. She gets a cup of coffee and a snack.

She tells me, "It's been a long day. It's great to see a friendly face after all the stress.

Losing the purse was just one more thing."

I smile, "I'm glad that I could do something to help."

"Everything is beginning to turn around for me. My life is only going to get better."

"You seem sad about something."

She confides in me, "I was going with this guy for two years. We talked about getting married. But things just slowed down. Nothing seemed to move anymore. That was that! He bailed first. I couldn't admit to myself what was happening. I went out drinking with the girls the other night to drown my sorrows. And I lost my purse."

"That was last night?"

"Yeah, last night."

She is not even sure when she lost the purse. She is confusing me about the chronology.

"So all the rain came falling down at one time."

She smiles back, "You might say that."

"Jeanne, you have a beautiful smile."

"That was one thing. He never complemented me. He never told me how great I looked. It made me feel as if I was losing my charm. As if I was never going to escape from the dark cloud that hung over me."

"How are you doing today?"

"Better. The sun is shining. It is a glorious day."

“Wonderful”

“I’ve been telling you all about myself. What about you?”

“There isn’t much to tell. I work at home. I do a lot of stuff on the computer. So it’s great to get out in the world and see people.”

“Graphic design?” she asks about me.

“Something like that. Data base. Electronic biography.”

“That sounds fascinating.”

“I run a consulting firm.”

“I want to learn more. You sound like a detective.”

“I guess that I’m an electronic detective. I find people.”

We get along so well. She is warming up to me.

She invites me to dinner, “I have to eat. You have to eat. I’ll buy you dinner.”

I tell her about my appointment. I need to call and cancel. I act reluctant. It is perfect. I agree to be her guest.

At dinner, she is even more open with me. She is ready to reveal her every secret. I can barely contain myself. I work to be my charming self. I just want to rush her back to her place.

“I think that I took too many risks in my life. I needed a change. That was what I hoped for from the last guy that I was with. It never worked out.”

She is testing me. She hopes that I will be the replacement lover. I try to maintain an air of sophistication. She has such a sunny disposition. I feel as if I am crushing a tame bird.

I look at her painted lips. They are so moist and appealing. Her sweet hands rest on the table. She is such a tender thing. This is even better than I imagined.

As the evening wears on, I can tell that she is becoming fatigued very quickly. I will have to do what I can to seal this deal.

“I really should get let you go so that you can get a good night sleep.”

“You’ve been so perfect company that you must come up for a nightcap.”

I warn her, “I just might fall asleep on your couch.”

She touches me on the shoulder, “You have nothing to worry about. I’ll take care of you.” And she will.

She drives me back to her place in her cream-colored Lexis. I am staring her down with the lights dimmed in her living room. I only have eyes for her.

Our drinks calm us down and prepare us for whatever might follow.

I tell her, “You’re quite a daring person.”

“What do you mean?”

“You don’t even know me. And you invite me back to your place.”

“You’ve had my purse. You’ve learned everything about me. I thought that it would be a fair trade.”

“I’ve had your purse. That doesn’t mean that I really know you.”

She questions me with her look, “You’ve looked inside.”

I smile, “You don’t know that for sure. I don’t really like to pry.”

“But that’s what you do for a living. You’re a sick sort. You’ve had fantasies. I bet that you’re even having them now. I’m good at satisfying people’s dreams.”

“I bet you are.”

“Don’t you want to learn more about who I really am. The girl behind the mask.”

“I stand up for a moment.

“There’s not much that you’ve kept from me.”

She takes my comment as a complement, an invitation to more games of hide and seek. She is overwhelmed by the play already. But here the fox is trying to turn the hunt against the horseman and his hounds. This is her place. I will go along while I can. I will obey her rules even if I am the arbiter interpreting them for her. Let the judgement hold sway.

“What do you want from me? Forgiveness? What can I really do to change things?”

“I want purity.”

“I’ve screwed up too many times to give you that. What do you want instead?”

“For every action up and dirty, there has be its opposite down and clean to take away all the hurt from the original fuck up. I’m not sure if that’s going to be enough for either of us.”

“You’re not going to hurt me?”

“I’m not going to do anything to you that you wouldn’t do to yourself.”

She doesn’t seem to grasp anything I am saying to her. But that doesn’t stop me from trying to make a point. This is not intellectual. It has to be understood physically. She will understand.

She asks me, “What do you really want? To forget about when things really got out of hand.”

“You could put it that way.”

“I really can’t help you with that. Although I wish that I could..”

I want to explain the feeling that makes bodies wrestle in the night. I want to be in touch with myself. She doesn’t know me, but she is willing to surrender too much for us to be together. I want to understand why.

She repeats her question, “You’re not going to hurt me?”

She is already hurting herself. She is willing to let these things happen.

I am afraid how it gets when things just get out of control. I am so concentrated on my work. It is my mission. It is my one love. But I hate it when I get worked into a frenzy and don’t even recognize who I am. That craziness just takes me over I want it more and more. I can’t hold back. Then the hunger sets in. I can taste it.

“Does it happen to you too? You just get so lost in the experience. That’s what you’re living for. You skin comes alive. Your whole body tingles. Then you just let go, and this power takes over. You do things that you would never do under normal circumstances.

For the time being, she is trying to maintain her decorum. She will not admit to being like me.

“If I have those feelings, I suppress them. You have to maintain some control over your desires. You can’t lose your direction in life. You simply can’t.”

“It never turns out that way for you. Your feelings take over. That’s why I’m here. You can’t resist. And then you just lose it. You do things that make you feel ashamed. At the moment, it’s the only thing that matters. The wrestling in the night. You know what I’m talking about.”

“I think that I’m different. I don’t mean to hurt anyone.”

“But you can feel how you are degrading yourself. But that becomes your badge of

honor. Your badge of pain. You pride yourself on how much you can take. And you just want to show yourself for the world. You want to show them how tough you are. You think that it makes you look attractive.”

“I’m not like that at all.”

“You get thrill when a guy looks at you.”

“Not if it’s some creepy kind of guy.”

I don’t believe her upstanding pose, “What makes him creepy? That he catches you at your own game. Or that he encourages you even more.”

She won’t give in. She keeps the mask on, “I know what creepy is. He could be creepy when I meet him. He could get weird on me when I start to talk to him. He could hide that side of himself until he makes it back to my place. It’s all pretty much the same thing. Creepy is as creepy does.”

“But you want the same thing that he does.”

“I want a lot more than he does. I want someone who cares for me. Who is concerned about what I do.”

“That’s all part of the front that you put on. Down deep, you’d give everything up to your own pleasure. You are ravenous. You get a little, and it only makes you want more. It’s not just about affection. You like it raw. Stripped of all the pretense. And when you’re waste deep in the shit, it could be totally anonymous as far as you’re concerned. You just feel yourself going full throttle like a machine. You suck up everything around you.”

She objects, “That is not me at all.”

But it is hitting too close to home. This is Jeanne herself without a doubt.

“You wanted to lose your purse. Don’t pretend. That’s why I found it. That’s how I found you. Just as you like.”

“That’s psychotic.”

“You left it in the open. You almost abandoned it.”

“You’re not telling me that you were there.” She has a frightened look.

“I didn’t have to be. I just know those things.”

“What are you saying?”

I turn the question around, “What are you saying. It’s not as if this behavior is something new for me. I’ve seen you before, Jeanne.”

“Have you been following me?”

“It’s not me. It’s the way that you are. It what you do.

She likes to play fast and loose with her own fate.

“You are trying to pretend that I meant things to be like this.”

“These are things of your own making. It’s not because anyone has really done anything to you. Or changed you in an way. This is who you really are.”

She wants to make the record clear with regards to her psychology, “You really are confusing a little self-destructiveness with a desire to truly do damage to myself. There is a difference.”

“I suppose that there is. But in your case, one leads to another.”

She hardly wants to go along with my characterization. She is still pretending that this is just fun and games for her. And if it’s more than that, it all due to my account. I don’t even have

a negative bone in my body. I'm here to serve my little lamb for what it's worth.

I try to put a positive spin on it all. "I'm here to help you."

I realize that's going to be my defense. It was her struggling that made it all turn out badly. And this was really what she wanted in the first place. I was just here to oblige. I start to sound like such a gentleman. That is why I have intervened.

She was a hopeless soul. And I offered my support. So be it if she saw me as a little cracked. Sometimes a prophet is rejected in his home. That does not dissuade me from my mission. She is not alone.

I am amazed that I have to repeat the same thing over and over again. These sweet things just venture into harm's way again and again. They don't have the least idea what they are doing. Thank heavens for caring types like myself.

Jeanne cannot appreciate the burden that I bear just to be around for her. She even suspects my motive when I am all about her well being. Sure I have invited myself into her apartment. But what could be better for her. I am here to clean up the mess that is her life.

Jeanne might object that she can take care of things on her own. But up to this point, she has only nurtured her self-destructive behavior. I am here to end all that. If she wants to push things to the limit, that is just great. But let her truly know her limits. Not this jumping back and forth between good and bad times. Grab the gusto while she can. This may be her last opportunity to truly live the magic.

"What do you want? Do you want to take my soul?"

She dumps her purse all over her floor. Do you want this? Take it! Take any of it.

I already have had this opportunity. I have taken everything that I need. I have robbed her of every bit of her identity.

"I don't want anything from you."

She appears surprised. "Why? I'll give you whatever you want. Go ahead. Take it."

It's all paper. I want something more. This is becoming an unusual interaction between us. She no longer knows how to defend herself.

"So you are going to kill me. Why are you doing this to me?"

"Think about it. Tell me what you want. What do you want from me?"

She has done this so many time. Of course, this may be her ultimate performance. The one that she can't live down.

"Is there anything that you're still hiding?"

She hates the slow transformation that she has seemed to tolerate in her life. She has pushed her desire for pleasure to such an extent that she now lives for its contrary pain. She can only feel it when it pricks at her nerve endings. This is all that she sees. It has become an art form. I can see the marks on the body—so faint, but visible. The slight indentations, the impressions. The metamorphosis.

These are my entry points. Her requests to me. Like a calling card. I read the impressions and react. I am an able student. And I am willing to do what she desires even when she pretends to deny her true wishes.

"My Darling, I am here for you as if I have been here all my life."

She brightens up whether by fear or excitement. In her state, it is all pretty much the same thing.

I add to my list, “What do you really want? Memories. To return to a time more perfect. How can you regress? Your body can’t travel back in time. You ache for satisfaction, and this is the only way that you can get it.”

The contents of her purse are still strewn on her floor. She sits slumped in her chair. She cowers as she awaits my next move. I want her to tell me what to do.

When she screams in agony, will it be a sigh of ecstasy. How will I know how to interpret her gestures? Does everything mean go? Once we start, we cannot stop. But what about her will. Mustn’t it remain intact through the procedure? And the will needs the integrity of the body. How can she seek deep pain without damaging her body or her psyche? Is that the skill of the master? Is that her discipline?

If she is truly adept at taking such physical incisions, then let me learn her experienced lessons. How to penetrate without even touching. How to touch the core of her being. How to acquire the invisibility of the spirit. To not even make contact.

Is it the words or the fear that leads me on in this process? If I say nothing, does that only make it worse. I need a reply from her. I have been doing all talking. I have asked the questions. She is used to this. She does it over and over again. And she is recoiled, the victim of her emotions.

I would have thought that she was prepared for this eventuality. She hopes that some object on the floor might give me pause in my method. If I would just stare at her identity card long enough until I realize something important. Some reason to let her walk away.

Each time that I do this, I realize how difficult it is to effect my wishes. Look at this place. It’s already a mess. I haven’t even gotten started. Imagine doing this over and over and over again. She understands. This is part of her repertoire. I am not the first to haunt these hallowed halls. Jeanne, what do you want from me? I’ll do whatever you say.

Maybe you want us to switch roles. After all, that was your temptation from the get go. You wanted me to adapt to your technique. Learn to hold my breath. Learn to bear the most excruciating pain. The burning of acid. Getting down to the bone. You are here to cure me. I am your most noble patient. I will bear any indignity for your love.

Who will clean up after it is all over? Make it seem as if nothing happened here. Send the guest on his way. You are so good at obscuring your discomfort. What have you been doing? It looks so nice here.

Now I realize why I am here. I need to straighten out. Make it seem as if no one even lives here. It’s a model house.

I have just opened the door. The place is empty. I am going to wait here for her. I need to surprise her. I was supposed to meet her to give her the purse. But I called at the last moment to tell her that I got held up at the office. Held up, hardly. I made the call across the street from her place. And I used the key to get in. She is so unsuspecting. She thinks that I really planned to give her the stuff back. Look at this!

I guess the stuff is back. Her purse is sitting on the couch. But I have invited myself in, unbeknownst to Jeanne. She wanted to do it on her terms. She is going to get a kick out of it when she opens the door and sees me sitting here

“Welcome home, honey. I told you that I was coming by.”

She wanted to get the jump on me. She’s done it that way before. I’m just not a yielding



person. And we are on a collision course. Baby doll, I am here for you.

She is used to giving herself away freely. She does it over and over again. It's no longer a puzzle. She's just there for the taking. That is how she wanted to be for me. Skip the purse. **I never took it! I never took it!**

She made a date. She wanted to meet me at a coffee shop. Then dinner. All a prelude to taking me back to her place for a thorough going over. And here we are right now. And it's all falling apart. Her plans.

I am going to give her the surprise of her life. Better than a surprise birthday party. Everyone knows about those things. This is even better. Surprise!

And she will jump in fright. A respectable leap.

"Who the hell are you? "

"I'm your guardian angel!"

Won't that get her going? If she just gave in to my advances then and there. This is going to be better than I planned—my surprise party.

I count down the moments. I can feel her creeping up on me. She is getting closer and closer. I can smell her perfume. I hear her turning the key in the lock, her spare key.

I can hardly wait. The sun has already gone down. There is a nighttime stillness in this place. And she has not arrived yet.

This is the game. She gives me her key. I am supposed to hide. And when she comes in, I surprise her. Then I fuck her brains out. Some game.

And you let me tell you my story so that you can feel all moral about this. How wrong I am. I am an invited guest. She gave me her permission. That is all it turns on. Three words. *It is OK*. I am here for you my darling. Has anyone ever cared for her so well in the past? No one that I know of. I am the perfect lover. Hidden and silent with surprises for my baby. She won't know what hit her.

It's all about how easily one gets over an ex. This is going to be faster than fast. I do the deed. Do the deed again. And then it's all over. I leave for good. Peace and quiet. If only everything in this life was so simple. And it will be!

**Do you have any idea how quickly the falcon swoops down on his prey. He returns to the sweet earth powered by the force of gravity. There is no resistance to his flight as he commits himself to his glorious mission. He carries his mission from the heavens down to the lost souls. His grace is immediate. He is the lover returning to his beloved.**

We could pretend that this was all a horrible mistake. That would be our starting point. I could go out this door and act like this never happened. But then what would I get for all my incredible effort. My obtaining of the purse. My careful examination of her personal documents. A real effort on my part to get to know her.

I am to deep to stop now. I am here for you my dear. I am on my knees for you.

After her initial heart attack or call it what you will, she will recover to ask me, "Why are you here."

"This is no different than what you do all the time. Every night you bring some stranger back to your place. And after it's all over, you check yourself for damage. I'm just speeding up the process. I'm giving you the good and the bad all at once. Embrace me!"

And if no one calls, if no one stops by to check on you, it is as if you never existed. You

never have been here at all.

If she is missed, I could always bring her back. Start the whole story all over again. Look for another sweet thing just like her.

“I am your angel. I am here to bring you to paradise.”

This is better than being invited to a party. I’ve even made up the table. A candlelight dinner before our final toast. I know that you’ve thought about me for days. Well, now I am here. Hooray! Your fantasy lover. And I will do everything that you ask and more some.

“Jeanne, do you know what your mistake was? When I stole your identity, you should have left it alone. Let it go for good. But you wanted to get it back. Stupid idea!”

“Well, my dear, what do you plan to do now? Grab a cup of tea, come over here, and let’s talk.”

Have you ever been lost in the street? It’s dark, and your directions don’t work.

“It is very dark, my dear. And you are lost in your own apartment. Isn’t that the worst nightmare. You are lost because you would not let your identity go. You have remained this obsolete thing. There must be someone who could help you. Grope around. There may be another body or two piled up in the darkness.

I’m sorry that I didn’t call first. Come to think of it, I did. You weren’t in. I told you that I was coming.

I think that Jeanne resents the fact that I am not giving her a chance to talk. Jeanne, say something to me. Tell me how much that you love me. Tell me.

“Who are you?”

“I’m a friend. Someone tried to jimmy your door. I caught them. I thought that I’d wait here until you came home.”

“Why didn’t you call the police?”

“I wanted to. I left my phone at home. I didn’t want to go inside your apartment. I thought that would be wrong. I needed to stay here to guard the place.”

She fools with the door until she is able to close it.

“Why don’t you come in? I’m not sure how I can thank you.”

I know a few ways. How clear do I need to make it for you? No matter what way it happens, you keep inviting me into your place. So I might as well break in and hide. I just hate wasting time. I don’t even want to wait until you make it home. It’s like waiting for dinner. Sometimes you just want to eat it all right away. And I’m here to do just that to you. I want to taste you. Just like any lover. Kiss me honey. I love your perfume. I love your flavored kisses. I love it when you stick your tongue down my throat. All of it dear.

Now it is time to clean up. And I hate doing dishes. I should have kept you around to help. But you had to cut out. Oh, shit!

I’m just hoping that some more guest might show up later on. I’ve left the door open. If anyone wants to venture in, they are welcome. Come one, come all.

I bet that people can smell the appealing aroma coming from inside the door. Let them know that dinner is ready. This is the same feeling that has captured me when I believed that I had smelled her perfume. That smell pervades everything that she has in her purse. It is her personality. Even more than an identity card, it is the blend between her body chemistry and the magic of the gentle scent.

I can smell her body in the mix. It is that desire to never stop. To go until dawn. To take like the hungry creature that she is. I can smell her hunger. I can taste it in her. That decay that works from the inside.

She has gone out for a while. I can hear her coming back. She hesitates by the door. She stamps her boots before she starts to work her way up the stairs. By her slow deliberate movement, I can tell that she has packages with her. She is very cautious as she makes her way up. She doesn't want to fall on the stairs. She never knows what is waiting for her as she makes it all the way up.

Maybe if the door is locked, the surprise will be easier to bear. I glide over to the door and engage the lock. She is not even close to making it up.

My heart is racing due to the excitement. I can even hear hers race as she works her way up all the stairs. She wants to rush but hold back.

"Jeanne, I'd like to welcome you home."

"Who the hell are you?"

"Don't treat me so badly. I am the guy who found your keys."

"What the fuck are you doing in my place?"

"I wanted to surprise you."

"You've surprised me. Now you can leave."

"I did you a favor. Don't treat me so badly. I'll leave. But say good night, Jeanne."