

## 9. UNMATCHED

“If you want a coherent story, you may have to create one. Add characters that don’t actually exist. Create a time line that explains motivation. Portray events that smooth over the fits and starts of discontinuous time.”

“There isn’t a story?”

“Just a lot of noise interrupting your hopes for your life. Your money going out without any real return. Your desire to be part of something when you are isolated in the universe.”

*“We were waiting in line to get in a show. And he was waiting behind me.”*

*“Who was?”*

*“That freaky guy that we see all the time.”*

*“Really!”*

*“Yeah. You don’t know how it felt. I could just feel him looking at me. But it got worse. I felt all warm inside. In this really queasy way. As if he was sucking the life from me.”*

*“That sounds like an overactive imagination.”*

*“He was in back of me. He was breathing on me.”*

*“Seriously?”*

*“Yeah, he was.”*

*“What did you do? Why didn’t you just start screaming?”*

*“I felt as if my voice had been taken from me.”*

*“It’s just a case of nerves.”*

*“No, it’s almost as if he’s a different kind of species. Like a vampire.”*

*“He never actually touched you.”*

*“His arm brushed mine accidentally.”*

*“What happened?”*

*“I felt as if my hand was on fire.”*

*“He really doesn’t have those powers!”*

*“How do you know? This happened to me. It didn’t happen to you.”*

*“It just seems too incredible for words.”*

*“I know that it sounds weird. But he is a weirdo.”*

*“She leaves the house because she expects something to happen.”*

*“What possibly could happen to make a difference?”*

*“Someone could try to rescue her from her doldrums.”*

*“Is it that bad?”*

*“I don’t know what to say. It’s just that it is going to be difficult for her to go back to an empty house.”*

*“But that might happen.”*

*“It probably will happen.”*

*“She’s not going to hurt herself.”*

*“Not exactly, But she is so far gone that she might not be able to make it out of the tunnel.”*

*“The tunnel.”*

*“As if she is buried underground.”*

“She just needs to be more open. She needs to give more of herself.”

“That’s who she is. Someone who needs to hide under all those clothes.”

“She’s healthy. She shouldn’t lack for confidence.”

“It’s something inside.”

“Her history.”

“History how?”

“Like a repeating disaster. Just thinking about it brings it back. It makes it worse.”

“So that is her story.”

“I thought that was what you were trying to tell me. That it isn’t due to something in her makeup. It’s just that she’s been pushed off the track, and she is having difficulty figuring out how to get back on.”

“Maybe someone needs to come back to the house to see that she doesn’t hurt herself.”

“We all have our nightmares. It’s not really attractive to share them.”

“She has to be more attractive!”

“How is she going to do that?”

“A new attitude about her life.”

“She needs a script. A motive for thinking differently about herself. If she had some clear purpose, and she applied herself to make something happen.”

“She’d need a more convincing story line.”

“Some guy who’s seen her out. Who wants to find out why she is the way that she is. She has a very pretty face.”

“Very delicate. She does a good job at hiding what is going on.”

“There is little bit of a blank stare on her part. As you say, she is hiding something with that mask of hers.”

“What would she think if she knew that we were spending so much time talking about her?”

“She has to know that people talk? That’s why she comes out in the first place. And then she runs back to her place.”

“Does she work?”

“Something in publishing. One of those jobs where she gets her work done, but no one bothers her.”

“So it only makes her feel more lonely.”

“That is part of her conditions.”

“The sadness of Emily.”

“Is that her name?”

“It could be!”

“Now you have the beginnings of a story. Emily leaves her home in Boston and heads south.”

“We won’t have a very good story if she isn’t more outgoing. She has to attract attention.”

“It’s her face. Her look. As if she is asking for someone to come talk to her.”

“She is asking for trouble.”

“You’re not saying that she’s desperate.”

“Maybe a little.”

“What does it mean for Emily to be desperate. What is she desperate for?”

“Recognition. Someone to see her for what she is, not what they want to see her for.”

“How does Emily do that?”

“She needs a better cover story.”

“She’s an artist.”

“Yeah, but if you make her an artist all that solitude is part of the artistic search.”

“Then she is an anti-artist.”

“Who leaves her home in Boston.”

“She is looking for somewhere to make her mark.”

“That makes her too vulnerable.”

“Does she smoke?”

“She drinks.”

“Go buy her a drink.”

“I don’t want to get involved in her story.”

“Why are you taking so much time to tell it?”

“I want to get involved. I want this to mean something more than it does.”

“You need to get to know Emily so that you can love her. And she can be in the story that you are writing.”

“I want to watch her. I want to know her. But I don’t want her to know that she is part of my story.”

“How are you going to do that?”

“I need someone to play my role for her. Someone to act as if he is interested in her.”

“Will he really be interested in her?”

“We’ll see how things play out.”

“He won’t really like her.”

“She is going to have to change how she looks if she is really going to play a part in this story.”

“Then she’s going to expect something to happen. And she’ll be even more vulnerable to these guys who don’t care a bit about Emily.”

“Do you care about Emily?”

“I want to care for her. I’m not sure if she’s going to give me the chance.”

“Emily wants to do damage to herself.”

“Physical damage.”

“No, mental damage. She wants to make it impossible for you to know her. She doesn’t want you to observe her. She doesn’t want you to write about her. She wants a life that is completely independent of your story!”

Emily meets her friend Amanda for lunch.

*“I didn’t know that Emily had any friends.”*

Amanda is excited, “Life is like a puzzle. The path to success. You figure out the puzzle, and you can make a fortune.”

“You remember Steve’s wife Helen.”

“She was a wild girl. Didn’t she become a stripper?”

“She was an artist. And then she used to do performance art pieces. She would get naked. One guy told her that she had a great body, and she could make loads of money stripping. It would give her the time that she needed for her art.”

“Sounds like a terrible equation.”

“It gets worse. She meets this guy. Danny. And Danny think that he’s someone special. He gets Helen to bring her friends over.”

“Danny has money!”

“Loads of it. He’s one of those bad boys.”

“I thought that Helen is still married to Steve.”

“She was in the process of getting a divorce.”

“Didn’t Steve meet her at a strip club.”

“He tells everyone that he met her at an art show.”

“He’s the one who told her to strip.”

“Not exactly! So unbeknownst to Helen, Danny is taping all their shenanigans. He has sex with these girls. And he has all these secret tapes.”

“That has to be illegal.”

“It is illegal.”

*“You like talking about this sleazy kind of shit.”*

“What happens to Helen?”

“She gets tired of Danny.”

“And Danny is still taping the girls.”

“Helen makes the other girls think that Danny is OK. Even though that she’s moved on and wants nothing to do with him. And he gets more and more adventuresome.”

“You never did anything with him.”

“Heavens no! I know him by sight. But I’ve never even talked to him.”

“Gossip!”

“I am friends with Helen.”

“And she knows about the tape.”

“She does now. One of the girls found his collections. She actually stole it. And she and her friends were watching the tapes. One girl learned that she was on them, and she went to the cops.”

“I bet that Danny is in a load of shit.”

“He is.”

“But you don’t know the guy.”

“I know Steve. He and Helen have been divorced for a while.”

“And you have a thing for Steve.”

“Not exactly. I don’t like the way that he looks at women.”

“He is pretty hot.”

“Amanda, you are a slut!”

“I’m just saying.”

“I have this idea.”

“What is it?”

“You were talking about your plan to make a fortune. Steve has loads of money.”

“I thought that was Danny.”

“Danny, Steve. It’s all pretty much the same under the cover of night.

*“That weird guy tried to contact me on he internet.”*

*“What did you do?”*

*“I blocked him.”*

*“How do you know that it was him?”*

*“I saw his picture. It’s the same guy.”*

*“You didn’t write back him to him.”*

*“At first, I did. I thought that it was this cute boy who I met at the natural foods store.”*

*“So what did you tell him.”*

*“At first, I was real cool. Then I told him that I wouldn’t mind getting naked with him.”*

*“You really said that.”*

*“In so many words.”*

*“Did he ask you to send him a picture of you naked?”*

*“Not exactly! I practically volunteered.”*

*“You didn’t send him that picture of you sunbathing without your top on.”*

*“Yeah, I did. At least, I had it in the envelope. I was going to mail it on the way to school. Then I realized that it was the same guy.”*

*“How did you realize that?”*

*“Something that he said. I figured out that it wasn’t grocery boy.”*

“She met him on the internet.”

“She put an ad out?”

“No, she met him on one of those social networking sites.”

“One of those!”

“Yeah, he asked her to come visit him in Portland.”

“Are you sure that it wasn’t an ad?”

“It may have been an ad on Craigslist.”

“Is she a little desperate?”

“She’s just looking for someone that she can trust. And she wants to see it all before her eyes. Like on a computer screen.”

“She’s not a little insecure about herself.”

“That’s more a question of your point of view. You should cut her some slack.”

“I thought that she was engaged to get married. And she called it off at the last moment.”

“A girl has a right to change her mind!”

“So she is a little messed up!”

“We all do things that we regret.”

“The engagement. Or going of with some guy that she met on the internet.”

“No one’s perfect.”

”It all sounds pretty impulsive to me.”

“It’s all based on our need to love and be loved.”

“She falls in love too easily.”

“She likes to have fun. Do you blame her?”

“I think that I want a little more from life. Not just some promise that pops up on the computer screen.”

“You can make up any story to justify your point of view.”

*“Did you see her ass?”*

*“I didn’t want to look. I felt that I didn’t want to spoil my image of her.”*

*“She has a nice ass.”*

*“That’s not the point. I want to like her for who she is.”*

*“And she is what she is.”*

*“Don’t be a dick!”*

“I really don’t want to pretend. Mindy is the intersection of word and deed.”

“Is that some kind of puzzle that you create so that she has no way to escape your advances?”

“I am not going to admit that we are meant to be together. But I am meant to be with her.”

“How can you know that?”

“She has the code, the key code.”

“You’re still talking about that silly idea.”

“It works.”

“How can you look at someone and tell she matches the key code?”

“Everything about her can be accessed using that code. Her likes, her dislikes, her image, her essential being.”

“What is that supposed to mean?”

“That there are characteristics of self that can only discovered by using an deeper analysis.”

“What makes the analysis deeper?”

“It reveals patterns that can be seen.”

“Why does Mindy have it?”

“It’s hard to explain.”

“So you need a formula!”

“I do have a method.”

“To serve your madness. You just want Mindy, and you need an excuse. Even though she’s much too naive for you.”

“Innocent?”

“No, she isn’t aware of your sophisticated ways.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Love ‘em and leave ‘em.”

“You make me sound like some kind of monster.”

“Do you have what it takes to stay with a woman?”

“I’m not going to corrupt Mindy, if that’s your fear.”

“How old is she again?”

“She’s almost twenty.”

“She can’t even legally order a drink in a bar.”

“But she can sign a legal contract. What more do you want?”

“A little experience.”

*“I know that you don’t want to fuck me. But I’ll suck you off that is what you want.”*

“Are you clean?”

*“What does that mean?”*

*“You know: you have no traumas, you don’t have weird issues with your Dad, you don’t use drugs, you like to read books, you go to art galleries, you like the theater, you’ll pull your weight in a relationship, you’re not a gold digger.”*

*“Have you left anything off the list?”*

*“Not that I know of.”*

*“Don’t worry! I’m clean. I won’t call you unless you want to have sex, or you need a cute girl on your arm at a party. I won’t get in the way if you want to be with another girl. But I’ll be there at the drop of a hat if she’s giving you a hard time. I’ll be the perfect angel for your parents. I’ll never flirt with your friends. I’ll even work extra and help pay your bills if you want to take some time off to find yourself.”*

“How do I know that you are the right person for me?”

“I can make you feel good at any time of the night. I’ll come running if you call me. I’ll pick up your things after you. I’ll clean up the place for you.”

“It’s all in the past!”

“We had something going for us.”

“And now it’s gone!”

“You can’t say that!”

“I am saying that.

*“I turned off the movie because it was making me sick.”*

“Sick?”

*“Physically ill. Its incredible what kind of dicks guys can be.”*

*“You’re just learning that.”*

“Who did the make up for this movie? They made everyone look like a ghoul.”

“You’re going to have to fuck every girl in sight.”

“That is going to get me in a world of trouble.”

“You have to be discreet. At least for what it’s worth.”

*“You didn’t pay for this!”*

“At least, you’re working.”

“Look at this shit. No one respectable would be doing this kind of thing!”

*“I’m sorry. I really am!”*

“Promise you’ll never do that kind of thing ever again.”

“What thing?”

“This love thing!”

*“This dialogue is so fake.”*

*“We could watch the movie with the sound turned off.”*

*“Do you recognize yourself in any of these scenes?”*

*“What is that supposed to mean?”*

“I’m not who you think I am.”

“Who are you?”

"I'm someone who gets it done."

"What does that mean?"

"Sometimes you want a fuck, and you don't want to worry about the consequences."

"So you send the consequences down the line for another day."

"You really think that the world is textured like such a tight fabric. Some things just happen. Finito. No aftertaste."

"You like to watch people having sex."

"Are you a prude?"

"I'm just sensitive to other people's feelings. There is such a thing as privacy."

"What if they want to be watched?"

"So you're willing to give in to their exhibitionist mania."

"It's not a mania. It's just a way of being."

"I'm trying to get my life together."

"And how are you doing that? By coming on to other people's lovers."

"I can't do this."

"You already did it."

"I don't want to do it anymore. I promise myself to someone else."

"If you care about them so much, why are you letting your heart wander?"

"More like my body. My heart can so easily be moved!"

"It's thirty minutes into the movie. He's going to say it."

"Say what?"

"He's going to admit that he loves someone else."

"There is a background story that holds all these elements together."

He realizes that he has a power and now he wants to see what he can get away with it.

"Sometimes you have to crawl back in that hole of yours and just protect yourself."

*"Just hold on, I know it's coming!"*

"What?"

*"Watch the movie!"*

"Do you even read?"

"Books? Or people?"

*"Don't forget that the rent is due this week."*

*"If she is correlated with a number..."*

*"Another number is satisfaction. Money give the numbers more velocity. It is what gives the story its motivation. Numbers coordinate the excitement of the body with the excitement of the mind."*

"What happened with that guy who you were going out with?"

"There was all this time when I didn't have to think about him. And there as all this time when I didn't have to think about myself. And then I just went back to my life as if nothing happened."

"I can imagine this all written out. I can see it in my mind."

"Will you actually be able to get it written? Or will the feeling take over?"

"I know exactly how you feel."



“How could that be?”

“You just have to take one look at you.”

“That feels comforting!”

“*Guys used to say the wildest things to me in the street. Now they don't even give me a second look.*”

“*Should I see a doctor.*”

“*Can he fix me up?*”

“*He can make you look whatever you would like to look!*”

“*I want to look like a goddess.*”

“*That may take some work.*”

“*I used to be a goddess.*”

“It's been so long since we've hung out together. Was it at college?”

“No, the year after. I came to Boston to visit you. You were down in Atlanta.”

“I thought that you'd be married with a family by now.”

“I almost got married last year. And then at the last minute, she decided that she wanted to be with her high school sweetheart.”

“You're kidding?”

“I thought that she was too. The next thing I know she was out of my life. We had been together for seven years.”

“That is terrible.”

“At least, I've got a good job. What are you doing?”

“Still teaching English at the college.”

“Have you got tenure yet?”

“I just started on a tenure track position two years ago.”

“*I am so madly I love with you.*”

“*I met this fantastic guy, and he asked me to marry him.*”

“*Is this the beginning or the end of the story?*”

“What are you trying to tell me?”

“That I want to have sex with you wife.”

“I feel like killing you just hearing those words come from your lips.”

“What can you really do to stop me?”

“You're not going to succeed. Maureen thinks that you're a psychotic.”

“She just said that to you because she can feel my power. And she's afraid to admit that you're helpless to do anything to stop me.”

“I could take you by the throat and choke you with my bare hands.”

“Mike, you're not a man of the streets. You're a civilized guy. And you brought this on yourself by taunting me.”

“I never taunted you.”

“You called me an adolescent. You claimed that I just wanted to have sex with any girl who struck my fancy. Well, your wife strikes my fancy. I'm going to fuck her silly. Do nasty things that you never dreamed of. I'm going to climax all over her tits. And she is going to beg for more. What are you going to do about that?”

“You're some kind of monster.”

“But if I’m really the adolescent that you say that I am, this isn’t going to bother you. You’ll just rise above it with your superior knowledge.”

“It’s one thing to know that you’re an adolescent and rise above your trying to affect me with your childishness. But this is different. This is clearly vengeful and meant against me because I told the truth about you.”

“You were the one who helped the police entrap a serial killer. Good job, Mike!”

“Why did I ever think that you were my friend?”

“I am your friend. And I’m teaching you the lesson that you need to learn.”

“I don’t know what to say. I was trying to offer you some friendly advice. Almost in a professional manner. And you are so petty that you took it as a personal affront. So you went off on me. You need to be locked up.”

“Not before I have my way with your wife.”

“There is no way that this is going to happen.”

“She’s coming to my hotel room just for the occasion. And she is all shaved and ready. She is doing things for me that she never did for you.”

“That is bull shit.”

“You are the lying sack of shit. All that you ever did was complain. You complained about your wife. You complained about your friends. You complained about your colleagues. You complained about anyone who didn’t fit your view of what life had in store for them. Now deal with this!”

“Why are you so vindictive?”

“Why are you? Better yet, if you’re going to start the job, you better finish it; otherwise, your opponent is going to get up from the ground and do you in.”

“I could never imagine in my wildest dreams that you would do this to me.”

“You’re the damn writer. You’re supposed to be the one with the imagination. This is the one emotion that you don’t fully grasp. Because you claim to live in a moral universe. A lot of good your morality does you now.”

“There is no way that I can ever forgive you.”

“That’s all that you really can understand. Despair that is so transparent that it begs for redemption. This ain’t about that!”

Mike isn’t sure if Maureen would actually give in to Don’s suggestions. But just the words are enough for him. He could follow Don around and wait for the right moment. On the other hand, Don has made his point. All Mike can do is leave.

“Did that really happen to you?”

“I made it sound worse for the story.”

“He did sleep with your wife.”

“My ex-wife. It never really happened like in the story. I just exaggerated it for effect.”

He consoles himself with the retelling. Although the actual events may have been much worse than he imagined. Besides, Don accused him of having a weak imagination. Hardly a plus for a writer.

*“Did you hear that?”*

*“Hear what.”*

*“I think that someone is in the house. Will you go down and check?”*

“You turn me on so much. I can’t help taking off all my clothes and jumping on top of you.”

*“Men are all the same. You give them half a chance, and they’ll shack up with anyone in their vicinity!”*

*“So what am I supposed to do about it.”*

*“Leave him on the first opportunity that you get.”*

*“He’s got the money.”*

*“And you’ve got a contract.”*

*“A what?”*

*“You married him?”*

*“No!”*

*“We can still get him on palimony.”*

*“I never officially lived at his place.”*

*“I need you to pretend that you like her.”*

*The house lights are on to indicate closing time. But both men are still vying for her attention. The one man who claims that he has always loved her. And the other who has been skillful in convincing that his devotion is without bounds. Even at this late date, when it comes to such demonstrations of affection, she can’t tell the one from the other.”*

*“How are you going to pay for it all?”*

*“I’ve got an idea!”*

*“Tell me how all this started.”*

*“A while ago, I lived with this man. And I started to get bored with him. I did all this stuff on the internet. Nothing really came of it. And then my husband’s friend started coming on to me. And we did some things. And my husband found out.”*

*“He found out?”*

*“Yes, and no. It turns out that he didn’t trust me. So he got his friend to pretend to like me.”*

*“Pretend to like you?”*

*“Yeah. That’s how it started. But he ended up really like me. It all got screwed up. So I just left Boston.”*

*“I need you to pretend that you like her!”*

*“How do I do that?”*